# ST RONAN'S WELL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "WAVERLEY,
QUENTIN DURWARD," &c.

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A merry place, 'tis said, in days of yore;
But something ails it now—the place is cursed.

WORDSWORTH.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE CONSULTATION.

*Clown.* I hope here be proofs.—
*Measure for Measure.*

THE borough of —— lies, as all the world knows, about fourteen miles distant from St Ronan's, being the county town of that shire, which, as described in the Tourist's Guide, numbers among its objects of interest, that gay and popular watering-place, whose fame, no doubt, will be greatly enhanced by the present annals of its

earlier history. As it is at present unnecessary to be more particular concerning the scene of our story, we will fill up the blank left in the first name with the fictitious appellation of Marchthorn, having often found ourselves embarrassed in the course of a story, by the occurrence of an ugly hiatus, which we cannot always at first sight fill up, with the proper reference to the rest of the narrative.

Marchthorn, then, was an old-fashioned Scottish town, the street of which, on market-day, shewed a reasonable number of stout great-coated yeomen, bartering or dealing for the various commodities of their farms; and on other days of the week, only a few forlorn burghers, crawling about like half-awakened flies, and watching the town steeple till the happy sound of twelve strokes from Time's oracle should tell them it was time to make their meridian. The narrow windows of the shops intimated very imperfectly the miscellaneous contents of the interior, where every merchant, as the shopkeepers of Marchthorn were termed, *more Scottico*, sold everything that could be thought of. As for manu-

factures, there were none, excepting that of the careful Town-Council, who were mightily busied in preparing the warp and woof, which, at the end of every six or seven years, the town of Marchthorn contributed, for the purpose of weaving the fourth part of a member of Parliament.

In such a town it usually happens that the Sheriff-clerk, especially supposing him agent for several lairds of the higher order, is possessed of one of the best-looking houses; and such was that of Mr Bindloose. None of the smartness of the brick-built and brass-hammered mansion of a southern attorney appeared indeed in this mansion, which was a tall, thin, grim-looking building, in the centre of the town, with narrow windows and projecting gables, notched into that sort of descent, called crow-steps, and having the lower casements defended by stancheons of iron; for Mr Bindloose, as frequently happens, kept a branch of one of the national banks, which had been lately established in the town of Marchthorn.

Towards the door of this tenement, there ad-

vanced slowly up the ancient, but empty streets of this famous borough, a vehicle, which, had it appeared in Piccadilly, would have furnished unremitted laughter for a week, and conversation for a twelvemonth. It was a two-wheeled vehicle, which claimed none of the modern appellations of tilbury, tandem, dennet, or the like; but aspired only to the humble name of that almost forgotten accommodation, a whiskey; or, according to some authorities, a tim-whiskey. Green was, or had been, its original colour, and it was placed sturdily and safely low upon its little old-fashioned wheels, which bore much less than the usual proportion to the size of the carriage which they sustained. It had a calash head, which had been pulled up, in consideration to the dampness of the morning air, or to the retiring delicacy of the fair form which, shrouded by leathern curtains, tenanted this venerable specimen of antediluvian coach-building.

But, as this fair and modest dame noway aspired to the skill of a charioteer, the management of a horse, which seemed as old as the

carriage he drew, was in the exclusive charge of an old fellow in a postilion's jacket, whose grey hairs escaped on each side of an old-fashioned velvet jockey-cap, and whose left shoulder was so considerably elevated above his head, that it seemed as if, with little effort, his neck might have been tucked under his arm, like that of a roasted grouse-cock. This gallant equerry was mounted on a steed as old as that which toiled betwixt the shafts of the carriage, and which he guided by a leading rein. Goading one animal with his single spur, and stimulating the other with his whip, he effected a reasonable trot upon the causeway, which only terminated when the whiskey stopped at Mr Bindloose's door—an event of importance enough to excite the curiosity of the inhabitants of that and the neighbouring houses. Wheels were laid aside, needles left sticking in the half-finished seams, and many a nose, spectacled and unspectacled, was popped out of the adjoining windows, which had the good fortune to command a view of Mr Bindloose's front-door. The faces of two or three giggling clerks were visible at the bar-

red casements of which we have spoken, much amused at the descent of an old lady from this respectable carriage, whose dress and appearance might possibly have been fashionable at the time when her equipage was new. A satin cardinal, lined with grey squirrels' skin, and a black silk bonnet, trimmed with crape, were garments which did not now excite the respect, which in their fresher days they had doubtless commanded. But there was that in the features of the wearer, which would have commanded Mr Bindloose's best regard, though it had appeared in far worse attire; for he beheld the face of an ancient customer, who had always paid her law expenses with the ready penny, and whose accompt with the bank was balanced by a very respectable sum at her credit. It was, indeed, no other than our respected friend, Mrs Dods of the Cleikum Inn, St Ronan's, Aulton.

Now her arrival intimated matter of deep import. Meg was a person of all others most averse to leave her home, where, in her own opinion at least, nothing went on well without her imme-

diate superintendance. Limited, therefore, as was her sphere, she remained fixed in the centre thereof; and few as were her satellites, they were under the necessity of performing their revolutions around her, while she herself continued stationary. Saturn, therefore, would be scarce more surprised at a call from the Sun, than Mr Bindloose at this unexpected visit of his old client. In one breath he rebuked the inquisitive impertinence of his clerks, in another stimulated his housekeeper, old Hannah—for Mr Bindloose was a bluff bachelor—to get tea ready in the green parlour; and while yet speaking, was at the side of the whiskey, unclasping the curtains, rolling down the apron, and assisting his old friend to dismount.

"The japanned tea-cadie, Hannah—the best bohea—bid Tib kindle a spark of fire—the morning's damp—Draw in the giggling faces of ye, ye damned idle scoundrels, or laugh at your ain toom pouches—it will be lang or your weel-doing fill them." This was spoken, as the honest lawyer himself might have said, *in transitu*, the rest by the side of the carriage. "My stars,

Mrs Dods, and is this really your ain sell, *in propria persona?*—Wha lookit for you at such a time of day?—Anthony, hows a' wi' ye, Anthony?—so ye hae taen the road again, Anthony—help us down wi' the apron, Anthony—that will do.—Lean on me, Mrs Dods—help your mistress, Anthony—put the horses in my stable—the lads will give you the key.—Come away, Mrs Dods—I am blithe to see you straight your legs on the causeway of our auld borough ance again—come in by, and we'll see to get you some breakfast, for ye hae been asteer early this morning."

"I am a sair trouble to you, Mr Bindloose," said the old lady, accepting the offer of his arm, and accompanying him into the house; "I am e'en a sair trouble to you, but I could not rest till I had your advice on something of moment."

"Happy will I be to serve you, my gude auld acquaintance," said the Clerk; "but sit you down—sit you down—sit you down, Mrs Dods—meat and mess never hindered wark. Ye are something overcome wi' your travel—the spirit

canna aye bear through the flesh, Mrs Dods; ye should remember that your life is a precious one, and ye should take care of your health, Mrs Dods."

"My life precious!" exclaimed Meg Dods; "nane o' your whullywhaing, Mr Bindloose—Deil ane wad miss the auld girning ale-wife, Mr Bindloose, unless it were here and there a puir body, and maybe the auld house-tyke, that wadna be sae weel guided, puir fallow."

"Fie, fie! Mrs Dods," said the Clerk, in a tone of friendly rebuke; "it vexes an auld friend to hear ye speak of yourself in that respectless sort of a way; and, as for quitting us, I bless God I have not seen you look better this half score of years. But maybe you will be thinking of setting your house in order, which is the act of a carefu' and of a Christian woman—O! it's an awful thing to die intestate, if we had grace to consider it."

"Aweel, I daur say I'll consider that some day soon, Mr Bindloose; but that's no my present errand."

"Be it what it like, Mrs Dods, ye are right heartily welcome here, and we have a' the day to speak of the business in hand—*festina lente*, that is the true law language—hoolly and fairly as one may say—ill treating of business with an empty stomach—and here comes your tea, and I hope Hannah has made it to your taste."

Meg sipped her tea—confessed Hannah's skill in the mysteries of the Chinese herb—sipped again, then tried to eat a bit of bread and butter, with very indifferent success; and notwithstanding the lawyer's compliments to her good looks, seemed, in reality, on the point of becoming ill.

"In the deil's name, what is the matter!" said the lawyer, too well read in a profession where sharp observation is peculiarly necessary, to suffer these symptoms of agitation to escape him. "Ay, dame, ye are taking this business of yours deeper to heart than ever I kend you take onything. Ony o' your banded debtors failed, or like to fail? What then, cheer ye up—you can afford a little loss, and it canna be

ony great matter, or I would doubtless have heard of it."

"In troth, but it *is* a loss, Mr Bindloose; and what say ye to the loss of a friend?"

This was a possibility which had never entered the lawyer's long list of calamities, and he was at some loss to conceive what the old lady could possibly mean by so sentimental an effusion. But just as he began to come out with his "Ay, ay, we are all mortal, *Vita incerta, mors certissima!*" and two or three more pithy reflections, which he was in the habit of uttering after funerals, when the will of the deceased was about to be opened, Mrs Dods was pleased to become the expounder of her own oracle.

"I see how it is, Mr Bindloose," she said; "I maun tell my ain ailment, for you are no likely to guess it; and so, if ye will shut the door, and see that nane of your giggling callants are listening in the passage, I will e'en tell you how things stand with me."

Mr Bindloose hastily arose to obey her commands, gave a cautionary glance into the Bank-office, and saw that his idle apprentices were fast

at their desks—turned the key upon them, as if it were in a fit of absence, and then returned, not a little curious to know what could be the matter with his old friend; and leaving off all further attempts to put cases, quietly drew his chair near her's, and awaited her own time to make her communication.

"Mr Bindloose," said she, "I am no sure that you may mind, about six or seven years ago, that there were twa daft English callants, lodgers of mine, that had some trouble from auld St Ronan's about shooting on the Springwell-head muirs."

"I mind it as weel as yesterday, Mistress," said the Clerk; "by the same token you gave me a note for my trouble, (which wasna worth speaking about,) and bade me no bring in a bill against the puir bairns—ye had aye a kind heart, Mrs Dods."

"Maybe, and maybe no, Mr Bindloose—that is just as I find folk.—But concerning these lads, they baith left the country, and, as I think, in some ill blude wi' ane another, and now the auldest and the doucest of the twa came back again

about a fortnight sin syne, and has been my guest ever since."

"Aweel, and I trust he is not at his auld tricks again, goodwife," answered the Clerk. "I have-na sae mickle to say either wi' the new Sherriff or the Bench of Justices as I used to hae, Mrs Dods —and the Procurator-fiscal is very severe on poaching, being borne out by the new Association—few of our auld friends of the Killnakelty are able to come to the sessions now, Mrs Dods."

"The waur for the country, Mr Bindloose—they were decent, considerate men, that didna plague a puir herd callant mickle about a moor-fowl or a mawkin, unless he turned common fowler—Sir Robert Ringhorse used to say, the herd lads shot as mony gleds and pyots as they did game.—But new lords new laws—naething but fine and imprisonment, and the game no a feather the plentier.—If I wad hae a brace or twa of birds in the house, as everybody looks for them after the twelfth—I ken what they are like to cost me—and what for no?—risk maun be paid for.—There is John Pirner himsell has keepit the muir-side thirty year in spite of a' the

lairds in the country, that shoots, he tells me, now-a-days, as if he felt a rape about his neck."

"It wasna about ony game business, then, that you wanted advice?" said Bindloose, who, though somewhat of a digresser himself, made little allowance for the excursions of others from the subject in hand.

"Indeed is it no, Mr Bindloose," said Meg; "but it is e'en about this unhappy callant that I spoke to ye about.—Ye maun ken I have cleikit a particular fancy to this lad, Francis Tirl—a fancy that whiles surprises my very sell, Mr Bindloose, only that there is nae sin in it."

"None—none in the world, Mrs Dods," said the lawyer, thinking at the same time within his own mind, "Oho! the mist begins to clear up—the young poacher has hit the mark, I see—winged the old barren grey hen!—ay, ay—a marriage-contract, no doubt—but I maun gie her line.—Ye are a wise woman, Mrs Dods," he continued aloud, "and can doubtless consider the chances and the changes of human affairs."

"But I could never have considered what has befallen this puir lad, Mr Bindloose, through

the malice of wicked men.—He lived then at the Cleikum, as I tell you, for mair than a fortnight, as quiet as a lamb on a lea-rig—a decenter lad never came within my door—ate and drank aneugh for the gude of the house, and nae mair than was for his ain gude, whether of body or soul—cleared his bills ilka Saturday at e'en, as regularly as Saturday came round."

"An admirable customer, no doubt, Mrs Dods," said the lawyer.

"Never was the like of him for that matter," answered the honest dame. "But to see the malice of men!—Some of thae land-loupers and gill-flirts down at the filthy puddle yonder, that they ca' the Waal, had heard of this puir lad, and the bits of pictures that he made fashion of drawing, and they maun cuitle him awa doun to the hottle, where mony a bonnie story they had clecked, Mr Bindloose, baith of Mr Tirl and of mysell."

"A Commissary Court business," said the writer, going off again upon a false scent. "I shall trim their jackets for them, Mrs Dods, if you can but bring tight evidence of the facts—I will soon bring them to fine and palinode—I

will make them repent meddling with your good name."

"My gude name! What the sorrow is the matter wi' my name, Mr Bindloose? I think ye hae been at the wee cappie this morning, for as early as it is—My gude name!—if onybody touched my gude name, I would neither fash counsel nor commissary—I wad be down amang them like a jer-faulcon amang a wheen wild geese, and the best amang them that dared to say onything of Meg Dods bye what was honest and civil, I wad sune see if her cockernonnie was made of her ain hair or other folks'. *My* gude name, indeed!"

"Weel, weel, Mrs Dods, I was mista'en, that's a'," said the writer, "I was mista'en; and I dare to say you would haud your ain wi' your neighbours as weel as ony woman in the land—But let us hear now what the grief is in one word."

"In one word, then, Clerk Bindloose, it is little short of—murder," said Meg in a low tone, as if the very utterance of the word startled her.

"Murder—murder, Mrs Dods—it cannot be—there is not a word of it in the Sheriff-office—there could not be murder in the country, and

me not hear of it—for God's sake, take heed what you say, woman, and dinna get yourself into trouble."

"Mr Bindloose, I can but speak according to my lights," said Mrs Dods; "you are in a sense a judge in Israel, at least you are one of the scribes having authority—and I tell you, with a wae and bitter heart, that this puir callant of mine that was lodging in my house has been murdered or kidnapped awa' amang thae banditti folk down at the New Waal; and I'll have the law put in force against them, if it should cost me a hundred pounds."

The Clerk stood much astonished at the nature of Meg's accusation, and the pertinacity with which she seemed disposed to insist upon it.

"I have this comfort," she continued, "that whatever has happened, it has been by no fault of mine, Mr Bindloose; for weel I wot, before that blood-thirsty auld half-pay Philistine, MacTurk, got to speech of him, I clawed his cantle to some purpose with my hearth-besom.—But the poor simple bairn himsel, that had nae mair knowledge of the wickedness of human na-

ture than a calf has of a flesher's gully, he threappit to see the auld hardened blood-shedder, and trysted wi' him to meet wi' some of the gang at an hour certain the neist day, and awa he gaed to keep tryste, but since that hour naebody ever has set een on him.—And the man-sworn villains now want to put a disgrace on him, and say that he fled the country rather than face them!—a likely story—fled the country for them!—and leave his bill unsettled—him that was sae regular—and his portmantle and his fishing-rod, and the pencils and pictures he held sic a wark about!—It's my faithful belief, Mr Bindloose—and ye may trust me or no as ye like—that he had some foul play between the Cleikum and the Buckstane. I have thought it, and I have dreamed it, and I will be at the bottom of it, or my name is not Meg Dods, and that I wad have them a' to reckon on.—Ay, ay, that is right, Mr Bindloose, tak out your pen and ink-horn, and let us set about it to purpose."

With considerable difficulty, and at the expense of much cross-examination, Mr Bindloose extracted from his client a detailed account of the

proceedings of the company at the Well towards Tyrrel, so far as they were known to, or suspected by, Meg, making notes, as the examination proceeded, of what appeared to be matter of consequence. After a moment's consideration, he asked the dame the very natural question, how she came to be acquainted with the material fact, that a hostile appointment was made between Captain MacTurk and her lodger, when, according to her own account, it was made *intra parietes*, and *remotis testibus?*

"Ay, but we victuallers ken weel aneugh what goes on in our own houses," said Meg—"and what for no?—If ye *maun* ken a' about it, I e'en listened through the key-hole of the door."

"And do you say you heard them settle an appointment for a duel?" said the Clerk; "and did you no take ony measures to hinder mischief, Mrs Dods, having such a respect for this lad as you say you have, Mrs Dods?—I really wadna have looked for the like of this at your hands."

"In truth, Mr Bindloose," said Meg, putting her apron to her eyes, "and that's what vexes me mair than a' the rest, and ye needna say

mickle to ane whose heart is e'en the sairer that she has been a thought to blame. But there has been mony a challenge, as they ca' it, passed in my house when thae daft lads of the Wildfire Club and the Helter-skelter were upon their rambles; and they had aye sense aneugh to make it up without fighting, sae that I really did not apprehend onything like mischief.—And ye maun think, moreover, Mr Bindloose, that it would have been an unco thing if a guest, in a decent and creditable public like mine, was to have cried coward before ony of thae land-louping blackguards that live down at the hottle yonder."

"That is to say, Mrs Dods, you were desirous your guest should fight for the honour of your house," said Bindloose.

"What for no, Mr Bindloose?—Isna that kind of fray aye about honour? and what for should the honour of a substantial, four-nooked, sclated house of three stories, no be foughten for as weel as the credit of ony of these feckless callants that make such a fray about their reputation?—I promise you my house, the Cleikum, stood in the Auld Town of St Ronan's before they were born,

and it will stand there after they are hanged, as I trust some of them are like to be."

"Well, but perhaps your lodger had less zeal for the honour of the house, and has quietly taken himself out of harm's way," said Mr Bindloose; "for if I understand your story, this meeting never took place."

"Have less zeal! Mr Bindloose, ye little ken him—I wish ye had seen him when he was angry! —I dared hardly face him mysell, and there are no mony folk that I am feared for—Meeting! there was nae meeting, I trow—they never dared to face him fairly—but I am sure waur came of it than ever would have come of a meeting; for Anthony heard twa shots gang aff as he was watering the auld naig down at the burn, and that is not far frae the foot-path that leads to the Buckstane. I was angry at him for no making on to see what the matter was, but he thought it was auld Pirner out wi' the double barrel, and he wasna keen of making himsel a witness, in case he suld have been caa'd on in the poaching court."

"Well," said the Sheriff-clerk, "and I dare

say he did hear a poacher fire a couple of shots—nothing more likely. Believe me, Mrs Dods, your guest had no fancy for the party Captain MacTurk invited him to—and being a quiet sort of man, he has just walked away to his own home, if he has one—I am really sorry you have given yourself the trouble of this long journey about so simple a matter."

Mrs Dods remained with her eyes fixed on the ground in a very sullen and discontented posture, and when she spoke it was in a tone of corresponding displeasure.

"Aweel—aweel—live and learn, they say—I thought I had a friend in you, Mr Bindloose—I am sure I aye took your part when folk miscaa'd ye, and said ye were this, that, and the other thing, and little better than an auld sneck-drawing loon, Mr Bindloose.—And ye have aye keepit my penny of money, though, nae doubt, Tam Turnpenny lives nearer me, and they say he allows half a per cent mair than ye do if the siller lies, and mine is but seldom steered."

"But ye have not the Bank's security, madam," said Mr Bindloose, reddening. "I say

harm of nae man's credit—ill would it beseem me —but there is a difference between Tam Turnpenny and the Bank, I trow."

"Weel, weel, Bank here Bank there, I thought I had a friend in you, Mr Bindloose; and here am I, come from my ain house all the way to yours for sma' comfort, I think."

"My stars, madam," said the perplexed scribe, "what would you have me to do in such a blind story as yours, Mrs Dods?—Be a thought reasonacble—onsider that there is no *Corpus delicti.*"

"*Corpus delicti?* and what's that?" said Meg; "something to be paid for, nae doubt, for your hard words a' end in that.—And what for suld I no have a Corpus delicti, or a Habeas Corpus, or ony other Corpus that I like, sae lang as I am willing to lick and lay down the ready siller?"

"Lord help and pardon us, Mrs Dods, ye mistake the matter a'thegether! When I say there is no Corpus delicti, I mean to say there is no proof that a crime has been committed."

"And does the man say that murder is not a crime, than?" answered Meg, who had taken her own view of the subject far too strongly to be con-

verted by any other—" Weel I wot it's a crime, baith by the law of God and man, and mony a pretty man has been strapped for it."

" I ken all that very weel," answered the writer; " but, my stars, Mrs Dods, there is nae evidence of murder in this case—nae proof that a man has been slain—nae production of his dead body—and that is what we call the Corpus delicti."

" Weel, than, the de'il lick it out of ye," said Meg, rising in wrath, " for I will awa hame again; and as for the puir lad's body, I'll hae it fund, if it cost me turning the earth for three miles round wi' pick and shool—if it were but to give the puir bairn Christian burial, and to bring punishment on MacTurk and the murdering crew at the Waal, and to shame an auld doited fule like yoursell, John Bindloose."

She rose in wrath to call her vehicle; but it was neither the interest nor the intention of the writer that his customer and he should part on such indifferent terms. He implored her patience, and reminded her that the horses, poor things, had just come off their stage—an argu-

ment which sounded irresistible in the ears of the old she-publican, in whose early education due care of the post-cattle mingled with the most sacred duties. She therefore resumed her seat again in a sullen mood, and Mr Bindloose was cudgelling his brains for some argument which might bring the old lady to reason, when his attention was drawn by a noise in the passage.

## CHAPTER II.

### A PRAISER OF PAST TIMES.

——————Now your traveller,
He and his tooth-pick at my worship's mess.
*King John.*

THE noise stated at the conclusion of last chapter to have disturbed Mr Bindloose, was the rapping of one, as in haste and impatience, at the Bank-office door, which office was held in an apartment of the Banker's house, opening on the left hand of his passage, as the parlour in which he had received Mrs Dods opened upon the right.

In general, this office was patent to all having business there; but at present, whatever might be the hurry of the party who knocked, the clerks within the office could not admit him, being themselves made prisoners by the prudent jealousy of

Mr Bindloose, to prevent them from listening to his consultation with Mrs Dods. They therefore answered the angry and impatient knocking of the stranger only with stifled giggling from within, finding it no doubt an excellent joke, that their master's precaution was thus interfering with their own discharge of duty.

With one or two hearty curses upon them, as the regular plagues of his life, Mr Bindloose darted into the passage, and admitted the stranger into his official apartment. The doors both of the parlour and office remaining open, the ears of Luckie Dods, experienced, as the reader knows, in collecting intelligence, could partly overhear what passed. The conversation seemed to regard a cash transaction of some importance, as Meg became aware when the stranger raised a voice which was naturally sharp and high, as he did when uttering the following words, towards the close of a conversation which had lasted about five minutes—"Premium?—Not a pice, sir—not a courie—not a farthing—premium for a Bank of England bill?—d'ye take me for a fool,

sir?—do not I know that you call forty days par when you give remittances to London?"

Mr Bindloose was here heard to mutter something indistinctly about the custom of the trade.

"Custom!" retorted the stranger, "no such thing—damn'd bad custom, if it is one—don't tell me of customs—'Sbodikins, man, I know the rate of exchange all over the world, and have drawn bills from Timbuctoo—My friends in the Strand filed it along with Bruce's from Gondar—talk to me of premium on a Bank of England post-bill!—What d'ye look at the bill for?—D'ye think it doubtful?—I can change it."

"By no means necessary," answered Bindloose, "the bill is quite right, but it is usual to indorse, sir."

"Certainly—reach me a pen—d'ye think I can write with my rattan?—What sort of ink is this?—yellow as curry sauce—never mind—there is my name—Peregrine Touchwood—I got it from the Willoughbies, my Christian name—Have I my full change here?"

"Your full change, sir," answered Bindloose.

"Why, you should give *me* a premium, friend, instead of me giving you one."

"It is out of our way, I assure you, sir," said the Banker, "quite out of our way—but if you would step into the parlour and take a cup of tea——"

"Why, ay," said the stranger, his voice sounding more distinctly as (talking all the while, and ushered along by Mr Bindloose) he left the office and moved towards the parlour, "a cup of tea were no such bad thing, if one could come by it genuine—but as for your premium——" So saying, he entered the parlour and made his bow to Mrs Dods, who, seeing what she called a decent, purpose-like body, and aware that his pocket was replenished with English and Scotch paper currency, returned the compliment with her best curtsey.

Mr Touchwood, when surveyed more at leisure, was a short, stout, active man, who, though sixty years of age and upwards, retained in his sinews and frame the elasticity of an earlier period. His countenance expressed self-confidence, and something like a contempt for those who had

neither seen nor endured so much as he had himself. His short black hair was mingled with grey, but not entirely whitened by it. His eyes were jet-black, deep-set, small, and sparkling, and contributed, with a short up-turned nose, to express an irritable and choleric habit. His complexion was burnt to a brick-colour by the vicissitudes of climate, to which it had been subjected; and his face, which, at the distance of a yard or two, seemed hale and smooth, appeared, when closely examined, to be seamed with a million of wrinkles, crossing each other in every direction possible, but as fine as if drawn by the point of a very small needle. His dress was a blue coat and buff waistcoat, half boots remarkably well blacked, and a silk handkerchief tied with military precision. The only antiquated part of his dress was a cocked hat of equilateral dimensions, in the button-hole of which he wore a very small cockade. Mrs Dods, accustomed to judge of persons by their first appearance, said, that in the three steps which he made from the door to the tea-table, she recognized, without the possibility of mistake, the gait of a person who

was well to pass in the world; "and that," she added with a wink, "is what we victuallers are seldom deceived in. If a gold-laced waistcoat has an empty pouch, the plain swan's-down will be the brawer of the twa."

"A drizzling morning, good madam," said Mr Touchwood, as with a view of sounding what sort of company he had got into.

"A fine saft morning for the crap, sir," answered Mrs Dods, with equal solemnity.

"Right, my good madam; *soft* is the very word, though it has been some time since I heard it. I have cast a double hank about the round world since I last heard of a soft morning."

"You will be from these parts, then?" said the writer, ingeniously putting a case, which, he hoped, would induce the stranger to explain himself. "And yet, sir," he added, after a pause, "I was thinking that Touchwood is not a Scottish name, at least that I ken of."

"Scottish name?—no," replied the traveller; "but a man may have been in these parts before, without being a native—or, being a native,

he may have had some reason to change his name—there are many reasons why men change their names."

"Certainly, and some of them very good ones," said the lawyer; "as in the common case of an heir of entail, where deed of provision and tailzie is maist ordinarily implemented by taking up name and arms."

"Ay, or in the case of a man having made the country too hot for him under his own proper appellative," said Mr Touchwood.

"That is a supposition, sir," replied the lawyer, "which it would ill become me to put.—But at any rate, if you knew this country formerly, ye cannot but be marvellously pleased with the change we have been making since the American war—hill-sides bearing clover instead of heather—rents doubled, trebled, quadrupled—the auld reekie dungeons pulled down, and gentlemen living in as good houses as you will see anywhere in England."

"Much good may it do them, for a pack of fools!" replied Mr Touchwood, hastily.

"You do not seem much delighted with our

improvements, sir," said the banker, astonished to hear a dissentient voice where he conceived all men were unanimous.

"Pleased!" answered the stranger—"Yes, as much pleased as I am with the devil, who, I believe, set many of them agoing. Ye have got an idea that everything must be changed—Unstable as water, ye shall not excel—I tell ye, there have been more changes in this poor nook of yours within the last forty years, than in the great empires of the East for the space of four thousand, for what I know."

"And why not," replied Bindloose, "if they be changes for the better?"

"But they are *not* for the better," replied Mr Touchwood, eagerly. "I left your peasantry as poor as rats indeed, but honest and industrious, enduring their lot in this world with firmness, and looking forward to the next with hope—Now they are mere eye-servants—looking at their watches, forsooth, every ten minutes, lest they should work for their master half an instant after loosing-time—And then, instead of studying the Bible on the work days, to kittle the clergyman

with doubtful points of controversy on the Sabbath, they glean all their theology from Tom Paine and Voltaire."

"Weel I wot the gentleman speaks truth," said Mrs Dods. "I fand a bundle of their bawbee blasphemies in my ain kitchen—But I trow I made a clean house of the packman loon that brought them!—No content wi' turning the tawpies' heads wi' ballants, and driving them daft wi' ribbands, to cheat them out of their precious souls, and gie them the deevil's ware, that I suld say sae, in exchange for the siller that suld support their puir father that's aff wark and bedridden."

"Father! madam," said the stranger; "they think no more of their father than Regan or Goneril."

"In gude troth, ye have skeel of our sect, sir," replied the dame; "they are gomerils, every one of them—I tell them sae every hour of the day, but catch them profiting by the doctrine."

"And then the brutes are turned mercenary, madam," said Mr Touchwood. "I remember

when a Scotchman would have scorned to touch a shilling that he had not earned, and yet was as ready to help a stranger as an Arab of the desart. And now I did but drop my cane the other day as I was riding—a fellow who was working at the hedge, made three steps to lift it—I thanked him, and my friend threw his hat on his head, and 'damned my thanks, if that were all'—Saint Giles could not have excelled him."

"Weel, weel," said the Banker, "that may be a' as you say, sir, and nae doubt wealth makes wit waver; but the country's wealthy, that cannot be denied, and wealth, sir, ye ken——"

"I know wealth makes itself wings," answered the cynical stranger; "but I am not quite sure we have it even now. You make a great show, indeed, with building and cultivation; but stock is not capital, any more than the fat of a corpulent man is health or strength."

"Surely, Mr Touchwood, a set of landlords, living like lairds in good earnest, and tenants with better housekeeping than the lairds used to have, and facing Whitsunday and Martinmas as

I would face my breakfast—if these are not signs of wealth, I do not know where to seek for them."

"They are signs of folly, sir," replied Touchwood; "folly that is poor, and renders itself poorer by desiring to be thought rich; and how they come by the means they are so ostentatious of, you, who are a banker, perhaps can tell me better than I can guess."

"There is maybe a bill discounted now and then, Mr Touchwood; but men must have accommodation, or the world would stand still—accommodation is the grease that makes the wheels go."

"Ay, makes them go down hill to the devil," answered Touchwood. "I left you bothered about one Air bank, but the whole country is an Air bank now, I think—And who is to pay the piper?—But it's all one—I will see little more of it—it is a perfect Babel, and would turn the head of a man who has spent his life with people who love sitting better than running, silence better than speaking, who never eat but when they are hungry, never drink but when thirsty,

never laugh without a jest, and never speak but when they have something to say. But here, it is all run, ride, and drive—froth, foam, and flippancy—no steadiness—no character."

"I'll lay the burthen of my life," said Dame Dods, looking towards her friend Bindloose, "that the gentleman has been at the new Spawwaal yonder."

"Spaw do you call it, madam?—If you mean the new establishment yonder at St Ronan's, it is the very fountain-head of folly and coxcombry—a Babel for noise, and a Vanity-fair for nonsense."

"Sir, sir!" exclaimed Dame Dods, delighted with the unqualified sentence passed upon her fashionable rivals, and eager to testify her respect for the judicious stranger who had pronounced it,—"will you let me have the pleasure of pouring you out a dish of tea?" And so saying, she took bustling possession of the administration which had hitherto remained in the hands of Mr Bindloose himself. "I hope it is to your taste, sir," she continued, when the traveller had accepted her courtesy with the

grateful acknowledgment which men addicted to speak a great deal, usually shew to a willing auditor.

"It is as good as we have any right to expect, ma'am," answered Mr Touchwood; "not quite like what I have drunk at Canton with old Fong Qua—but the Celestial Empire does not send its best tea to Leadenhall-Street, nor does Leadenhall-Street send its best to Marchthorn."

"That may be very true, sir," replied the dame; "but I will venture to say that Mr Bindloose's tea is mickle better than you had at the Spaw-waal yonder."

"Tea, madam!—I saw none—Ash leaves and black-thorn leaves were brought in in painted canisters, and handed about by powder-monkeys in livery, and consumed by those who liked it, amidst the chattering of parrots, and the squalling of kittens. I longed for the days of the Spectator, when I might have laid my penny on the bar, and retired without ceremony—But no—this blessed decoction was circulated under the auspices of some half-crazed blue-stocking or other, and we were saddled with all the formali-

ty of an entertainment, for this miserable allowance of a cockle-shell full of cat-lap per head."

"Weel, sir, all I can say is, that if it had been my luck to have served you at the Cleikum Inn, which our folks have kept for these twa generations, I canna pretend to say ye should have had such tea as ye have been used to in foreign parts where it grows, but the best I had I wad have gi'en it to a gentleman of your appearance, and never charged mair than sixpence in all my time, and my father's before me."

"I wish I had known the Old Inn was still standing, madam," said the traveller; "I should certainly have been your guest, and sent down for the water every morning—the doctors insist I must use Cheltenham, or some substitute, for the bile—though, d—n them, I believe it's only to hide their own ignorance. And I thought this Spaw would have been the least evil of the two; but I have been fairly overreached—one might as well live in the inside of a bell. I think young St Ronan's must be mad, to have established such a Vanity-fair upon his father's old property."

"Do you ken this St Ronan's that now is?" inquired the dame.

"By report only," said Mr Touchwood; "but I have heard of the family, and I think I have read of them, too, in Scottish history. I am sorry to understand they are lower in the world than they have been. This young man does not seem to take the best way to mend matters, spending his time among gamblers and black-legs."

"I should be sorry if it were so," said honest Meg Dods, whose hereditary respect for the family always kept her from joining in any scandal affecting the character of the young Laird—"My forbears, sir, have had kindness frae his; and although maybe he may have forgotten all about it, it wad ill become me to say onything of him that should not be said of his father's son."

Mr Bindloose had not the same motive for forbearance; he declaimed against Mowbray as a thoughtless dissipator of his own fortune, and that of others. "I have some reason to

speak," he said, "having two of his notes for L.100 each, which I discounted out of mere kindness and respect for his ancient family, and which he thinks nae mair of retiring, than he does of paying the national debt—And here has he been raking every shop in Marchthorn, to fit out an entertainment for all the fine folk in the Well yonder; and tradesfolks are obliged to take his acceptances for their furnishings. But they may cash his bills that will; I ken ane that will never advance a bawbee on ony paper that has John Mowbray either on the back or front of it. He had mair need to be paying the debts which he has made already, than making new anes, that he may feed fules and flatterers."

"I believe he is like to lose his preparations too," said Mr Touchwood; "for the entertainment has been put off, as I heard, in consequence of Miss Mowbray's illness."

"Ay, ay, puir thing!" said Dame Margaret Dods; "her health has been unsettled for this mony a day."

"Something wrong here they tell me," said

the traveller, pointing to his own forehead significantly.

"God only kens," replied Mrs Dods; "but I rather suspect the heart than the head—the puir thing is hurried here and there, and down to the Waal, and up again, and nae society or quiet at hame; and a' thing ganging this unthrifty gait—nae wonder she is no that weel settled."

"Well," replied Touchwood, "she is worse they say than she has been, and that has occasioned the party at Shaws-Castle having been put off. Besides, now this fine young lord has come down to the Well, undoubtedly they will wait her recovery."

"A lord!" ejaculated Dame Dods; "a lord come down to the Waal—they will be neither to haud nor to bind now—ance wud and aye waur—a lord!—set them up and shute them forward—a lord!—the Lord have a care o' us!—a lord at the hottle!—Maister Touchwood, it's my mind he will only prove to be a Lord of Session."

"Nay, not so, my good lady—he is an Eng-

lish lord, and, as they say, a Lord of Parliament —but some folks pretend to say there is a flaw in the title."

"I'll warrant is there—a dozen of them!" said Meg, with alacrity, for she could by no means endure to think on the accumulation of dignity like to accrue to the rival establishment, from its becoming the residence of an actual nobleman. "I'll warrant he'll prove a land-louping lord on their hand, and they will be e'en cheap o' the loss—And he has come down out of order it's like, and nae doubt he'll no be lang there before he will recover his health, for the credit of the Spaw."

"Faith, madam, his present disorder is one which the Spaw will hardly cure—he is shot in the shoulder with a pistol-bullet—a robbery attempted, it seems—that is one of your new accomplishments—no such thing happened in Scotland in my time—men would have sooner expected to meet with the phœnix than with a highwayman."

"And where did this happen, if you please, sir?" asked the man of bills.

"Somewhere near the old village," replied the stranger; "and, if I am rightly informed, upon Wednesday last."

"This explains your twa shots, I am thinking, Mrs Dods," said Mr Bindloose; "your groom heard them on the Wednesday—it must have been this attack on the stranger nobleman."

"Maybe it was, and maybe it was not," said Mrs Dods; "but I'll see gude reason before I give up my ain judgment in that case. I wad like to ken if this gentleman," she added, returning to the subject from which Mr Touchwood's interesting conversation had for a few minutes diverted her thoughts, "has heard aught of Mr Tyrrel?"

"If you mean the person to whom this paper relates," said the stranger, taking a printed handbill from his pocket, "I heard of little else—the whole place rang of him, till I was almost as sick of Tyrrel as William Rufus was. Some idiotical quarrel which he had engaged in, and which he had not fought out, as their wisdom thought he should have done, was the principal cause of

censure. That is another folly now, which has gained ground among you. Formerly, two old proud lairds, or cadets of good family, perhaps quarrelled, and had a rencounter, or fought a duel after the fashion of their old Gothic ancestors; but men who had no grandfathers never dreamt of such folly—And here the folks denounce a trumpery dauber of canvass, for such I understand to be this hero's occupation, as if he were a field-officer, who made valour his profession; and who, if you deprived him of his honour, was like to be deprived of his bread at the same time.—Ha, ha, ha! it reminds one of Don Quixote, who took his neighbour, Samson Carrasco, for a knight-errant."

The perusal of this paper, which contained the notes formerly laid before the reader, containing the statement of Sir Bingo, and the censure which the company at the Well had thought fit to pass upon his affair with Mr Tyrrel, induced Mr Bindloose to say to Mrs Dods, with as little exultation on the superiority of his own judgment, as human nature would permit,—

"Ye see now that I was right, Mrs Dods,

and that there was nae earthly use in your fashing yoursell wi' this lang journey—The lad had just taen the bent, rather than face Sir Bingo; and troth, I think him the wiser of the twa for sae doing—There ye hae print for it."

"Ye may be mistaen for a' that your ainsell; for as wise as ye are, Mr Bindloose, I shall hae that matter mair strictly inquired into."

This led to a renewal of the altercation concerning the probable fate of Tyrrel, in the course of which the stranger was induced to take some interest in the subject.

At length, Mrs Dods receiving no countenance from the experienced lawyer, for the hypothesis she had formed, rose, in something like displeasure, to order her whiskey to be prepared. But hostess as she was herself, when in her own dominions, she reckoned without her host in the present instance; for the hump-backed postilion, as absolute in his department as Mrs Dods herself, declared that the cattle would not be fit for the road these two hours yet. The good lady was therefore obliged to await his pleasure, bitterly lamenting all the while the loss which a house of public entertainment was sure to sus-

tain by the absence of the landlord or landlady, and anticipating a long list of broken dishes, miscalculated reckonings, unarranged chambers, and other disasters, which she was to expect at her return. Mr Bindloose, zealous to recover the regard of his good friend and client, which he had in some degree forfeited by contradicting her on a favourite subject, did not choose to offer the unpleasing, though obvious topic of consolation, that an unfrequented inn is little exposed to the accidents she apprehended. On the contrary, he condoled with her very cordially, and went so far as to hint, that if Mr Touchwood had come to Marchthorn with post-horses, as he supposed from his dress, she could have the advantage of them to return with more dispatch to St Ronan's.

"I am not sure," said Mr Touchwood, suddenly, "but I may return there myself. In that case I will be glad to set this good lady down, and to stay a few days at her house, if she will receive me.—I respect a woman like you, ma'am, who pursue the occupation of your father—I have

been in countries, ma'am, where people have followed the same trade, from father to son, for thousands of years—And I like the fashion—it shews a steadiness and sobriety of character."

Mrs Dods made a joyous countenance at this proposal, protesting that all should be done in her power to make things agreeable; and while her good friend, Mr Bindloose, expatiated upon the comfort her new guest would experience at the Cleikum, she silently contemplated with delight the prospect of a speedy and dazzling triumph, by carrying off a creditable customer from her showy and successful rival at the Well.

"I shall be easily accommodated, ma'am," said the stranger; "I have travelled too much and too far to be troublesome. A Spanish venta, a Persian khan, or a Turkish caravanserail, is all the same to me—only, as I have no servant—indeed, never can be plagued with one of these idle loiterers,—I must beg you will send to the Well for a bottle of the water on such mornings as I cannot walk there myself—I find it is really of some service to me."

Mrs Dods readily promised compliance with this reasonable request; graciously conceding, that there "could be nae ill in the water itsell, but maybe some gude—it was only the New Inn, and the daft havrels that they ca'ad the Company, that she misliked. Folk had a jest that St Ronan dookit the Deevil in the waal, which gar'd it taste aye since of brimstone—but she dared to say that was a' papist nonsense, for she was tell't by him that kenn'd weel, and that was the minister himsell, that St Ronan was nane of your idolatrous Roman saunts, but a Chaldee, (meaning probably a Culdee,) whilk was doubtless a very different story."

Matters being thus arranged to the satisfaction of both parties, the post-chaise was ordered, and speedily appeared at the door of Mr Bindloose's mansion. It was not without a private feeling of reluctance, that honest Meg mounted the step of a vehicle, on the door of which was painted, "Fox Inn and Hotel, St Ronan's Well;" but it was too late to start such scruples.

"I never thought to have entered ane o' their hurley-hackets," she said, as she seated herself;

"and sic a like thing as it is—scarce room for twa folks!—Weel I wot, Maister Touchwood, when I was in the hiring line, our twa chaises wad hae carried, ilk ane o' them, four grown folk and as mony bairns. I trust that doited creature, Anthony, will come awa' back with my whiskey and the cattle as soon as they have had their feed.—Are ye sure ye hae room eneugh, sir?—I wad fain hotch mysell farther yont."

"O, ma'am," answered the Oriental, "I am accustomed to all sorts of conveyances—a dooly, a litter, a cart, a palanquin, or a post-chaise, are all alike to me—I think I could be an inside with Queen Mab in a nut-shell, rather than not get forward.—Begging you many pardons, if you have no particular objections, I will light my sheroot," &c. &c. &c.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE CLERGYMAN.

A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a-year.
DRYDEN, *from Chaucer.*

MRS DODS's conviction, that her friend Tyrrel had been murdered by the sanguinary Captain MacTurk, remained firm and unshaken; but some researches for the supposed body having been found fruitless, as well as expensive, she began to give up the matter in despair. "She had done her duty"—"she left the matter to them that had a charge anent such things"—and "Providence would bring the mystery to light in his own fitting time." Such were the moralities with which the good dame consoled herself;

and, with less obstinacy than Mr Bindloose had expected, she retained her opinion without changing her banker and man of business.

Perhaps Meg's acquiescent inactivity in a matter which she had threatened to probe so deeply, was partly owing to the place of poor Tyrrel being supplied in her blue chamber, and in her daily thoughts and cares, by her new guest, Mr Touchwood; in possessing whom, a deserter as he was from the Well, she obtained, according to her view of the matter, a decided triumph over her rivals. It sometimes required, however, the full force of this reflection, to induce Meg, old and crabbed as she was, to submit to the various caprices and exactions of attention which were displayed by her new lodger. Never any man talked so much as Mr Touchwood, of his habitual indifference to food, and accommodation in travelling; and probably there never was any traveller who gave more trouble in a house of entertainment. He had his own whims about cookery; and when these were contradicted, especially if he felt at the same time a twinge of incipient gout, one would have thought he had

taken his lessons in the pastry-shop of Bedreddin Hassan, and was ready to renew the scene of the unhappy cream-tart, which was compounded without pepper. Every now and then he started some new doctrine in culinary matters, which Mrs Dods deemed a heresy; and then the very house rang with their disputes. Again, his bed must necessarily be made at a certain angle from the pillow to the foot-posts; and the slightest deviation from this disturbed, he said, his nocturnal rest, and did certainly ruffle his temper. He was equally whimsical about the brushing of his clothes, the arrangement of the furniture in his apartment, and a thousand minutiæ, which, in conversation, he seemed totally to contemn.

It may seem singular, but such is the inconsistency of human nature, that a guest of this fanciful and capricious disposition, gave much more satisfaction to Mrs Dods than her quiet and indifferent friend, Mr Tyrrel. If her present lodger could blame, he could also applaud; and no artist, conscious of such skill as Mrs Dods possessed, is indifferent to the praises of such a connoisseur as Mr Touchwood. The pride of art

comforted her for the additional labour; nor was it a matter unworthy of this most honest publican's consideration, that the guests who give most trouble, are usually those who incur the largest bills, and pay them with the best grace. On this point Touchwood was a jewel of a customer. He never denied himself the gratification of the slightest whim, whatever expense he might himself incur, or whatever trouble he might give to those about him; and all was done under protestation, that the matter in question was the most indifferent thing to him in the world. "What the devil did he care for Burgess's sauces, he that had eat his kouscousou, spiced with nothing but the sand of the desert? only it was a shame for Mrs Dods to want what every decent house, above the rank of an alehouse, ought to be largely provided with."

In short, he fussed, fretted, commanded, and was obeyed; kept the house in hot water, and yet was so truly good-natured when essential matters were in discussion, that it was impossible to bear him the least ill-will; so that Mrs Dods, though in a moment of spleen she sometimes wished him

at the top of Tintock, always ended by singing forth his praises. She could not, indeed, help suspecting that he was a Nabob, as well from his conversation about foreign parts, as from his freaks of indulgence to himself, and generosity to others,—attributes which she understood to be proper to most "Men of Ind." But although the reader has heard her testify a general dislike to this species of Fortune's favourites, Mrs Dods had sense enough to know, that a Nabob living in the neighbourhood, who raises the price of eggs and poultry upon the good housewives around, was very different from a Nabob residing within her own gates, drawing all his supplies from her own larder, and paying, without hesitation or question, whatever bills her conscience permitted her to send in. In short, to come back to the point at which we perhaps might have stopped sometimes since, landlady and guest were very much pleased with each other.

But Ennui finds entrances into every scene, when the gloss of novelty is over; and the fiend began to seize upon Mr Touchwood just when he

had got all matters to his mind in the Cleikum Inn—had instructed Dame Dods in the mysteries of currie and mullegatawny—drilled the chambermaid into the habit of making his bed at the angle recommended by Sir John Sinclair—and made some progress in instructing the hump-backed postilion in the Arabian mode of grooming. Pamphlets and newspapers, sent from London and from Edinburgh by loads, proved inadequate to rout this invader on Mr Touchwood's comfort; and, at last, he bethought himself of company. The natural resource would have been the Well—but the traveller had a holy shivering of awe, which crossed him at the very recollection of Lady Penelope, who had worked him rather hard during his former brief residence; and although Lady Binks's beauty might have charmed an Asiatic, by the plump graces of its contour, our senior was past the thoughts of a Sultana and a haram. At length a bright idea crossed his mind, and he suddenly demanded of Mrs Dods, who was pouring out his tea for breakfast, into a large cup of a very particu-

lar species of china, of which he had presented her with a service on condition of her rendering him this personal service,—

"Pray, Mrs Dods, what sort of a man is your minister?"

"He's just a man like other men, Mr Touchwood," replied Meg Dods; "what sort of a man should he be?

"A man like other men?—ay—that is to say, he has the usual complement of legs and arms, eyes and ears—But is he a sensible man?"

"No muckle o' that, sir," answered Dame Dods; "for if he was drinking this very tea that ye gat doun from London wi' the mail, he wad mistake it for common bohea."

"Then he has not all his organs—wants a nose, or the use of one at least," said Mr Touchwood; "the tea is right gunpowder—a perfect nosegay."

"Aweel, that may be," said the landlady; "but I have gi'en the minister a dram frae my ain best bottle of real Coniac brandy, and may I never stir frae the bit, if he didna commend my

whisky when he set down the glass! There is no ane o' them in the Presbytery but himsell—ay, or in the Synod either—but wad hae kenn'd whisky frae brandy."

"But what *sort* of man is he?—Has he learning?" demanded Touchwood.

"Learning?—aneugh o' that," answered Meg, "just dung donnart wi' learning—lets a' things about the Manse gang whilk gate they will, sae they dinna plague him upon the score. An awfu' thing it is to see sic an ill-redd-up house!—If I had the twa tawpies that sorn upon the honest man ae week under my drilling, I think I wad shew them how to sort a lodging."

"Does he preach well?" asked the guest.

"Oh, weel aneugh, weel aneugh—sometimes he will fling in a lang word or a bit of learning that our farmers and bannet lairds canna sae weel follow—but what of that, as I am aye telling them?—them that pay stipend get aye the mair for their siller."

"Does he attend to his parish?—Is he kind to the poor?"

"Ower muckle o' that, Maister Touchwood—I am sure he makes the Word gude, and turns not away from those that ask o' him—his very pocket is picked by a wheen ne'er-do-weel blackguards, that gae sorning through the country."

"Sorning through the country, Mrs Dods?—what would you think if you had seen the Fakirs, the Dervises, the Bonzes, the Imams, the monks, and the mendicants, that I have seen?—But go on, never mind—does this minister of yours come much into company?"

"Company?—gae wa'," replied Meg, "he keeps nae company at a', neither in his ain house or ony gate else. He comes down in the morning in a lang ragged night-gown, like a potato bogle, and down he sits amang his books; and if they dinna bring him something to eat, the puir demented body has never the heart to cry for aught, and he has been kenn'd to sit for ten hours thegither, black fasting, whilk is a' mere papestrie, though he does it just out o' forget."

"Why, landlady, in that case, your parson is anything but the ordinary kind of man you described him—Forget his dinner!—the man must

be mad—he shall dine with me to-day—he shall have such a dinner as I'll be bound he won't forget in a hurry."

"Ye'll maybe find that easier said than dune," said Mrs Dods; "the honest man hasna, in a sense, the taste of his mouth—forbye, he never dines out of his ain house—that is, when he dines at a'—A drink of milk and a bit of bread serves his turn, or maybe a cauld potato.—It's a heathenish fashion of him, for as good a man as he is, for surely there is nae Christian man but loves his own bowels."

"Why, that may be; but I have known many who took so much care of their own bowels, my good dame, as to have none for any one else.—But come—bustle to the work—get us as good a dinner for two as you can set out—have it ready at four to an instant—get the old hock I had sent me from Cockburn—a bottle of the particular Indian Sherry—and another of your own old claret—fourth binn, you know, Meg.—And stay, he is a priest, and must have port—have all ready, but don't bring the wine into the sun, as that silly fool Beck did the other day.—I can't go

down to the larder myself, but let us have no blunders."

"Nae fear, nae fear," said Meg, with a toss of the head, "I need naebody to look into my larder but mysell, I trow—but it's an unco order of wine for twa folk, and ane o' them a minister."

"Why, you foolish person, is there not the woman up the village that has just brought another fool into the world, and will she not need sack and caudle, if we leave some of our wine?"

"A gude ale-posset wald set her better," said Meg; "however, if it's your will, it shall be my pleasure.—But the like of sic a gentleman as yoursell never entered my doors."

The traveller was gone before she had completed the sentence; and, leaving Meg to bustle and maunder at her leisure, away he marched, with the haste that characterized all his motions when he had any new project in his head, to form an acquaintance with the minister of St Ronan's, whom, while he walks down the street to the Manse, we will endeavour to introduce to the reader

The Rev. Josiah Cargill was the son of a small

farmer in the south of Scotland; and a weak constitution, joined to the disposition for study which frequently accompanies infirm health, induced his parents, though at the expense of some sacrifices, to educate him for the ministry. They were the rather led to submit to the privations which were necessary to support this expense, because they conceived, from their family traditions, that he had in his veins some portion of the blood of that celebrated Boanerges of the Covenant, Donald Cargill, who was slain by the persecutors at the town of Queensferry, in the melancholy days of Charles II., merely because, in the plenitude of his sacerdotal power, he had cast out of the church, and delivered over to Satan by a formal excommunication, the King and Royal Family, with all the ministers and courtiers thereunto belonging. But if Josiah really derived himself from this uncompromising champion, the heat of the family spirit which he might have inherited was qualified by the sweetness of his own disposition, and the quiet temper of the times in which he had the good fortune to live. He was characterized by all who knew him as a mild, gentle, and studious

lover of learning, who, in the quiet prosecution of his own sole object, the acquisition of knowledge, and especially that connected with his profession, had the utmost indulgence for all whose pursuits were different from his own. His sole relaxations were those of a gentle, mild, and pensive temper, and were limited to a ramble, almost always solitary, among the woods and hills, in praise of which he was sometimes guilty of a sonnet, but rather because he could not help the attempt, than as proposing to himself the fame or the rewards which attend the successful poet. Indeed, far from seeking to insinuate his fugitive pieces into magazines or newspapers, he blushed at his poetical attempts while alone, and, in fact, was rarely so indulgent to his vein as even to commit them to paper.

From the same maid-like modesty of disposition, our student suppressed a strong natural turn towards drawing, although he was repeatedly complimented upon the few sketches which he made, by some whose judgment was generally admitted. It was, however, this neglected talent, which, like the swift feet of the stag in the fable,

was fated to render him a service which he might in vain have expected from his worth and learning.

My Lord Bidmore, a distinguished connoisseur, chanced to be in search of a private tutor for his son and heir, the Honourable Augustus Bidmore, and for this purpose had consulted the Professor of Theology, who passed before him in review several favourite students, any of whom he conceived well suited for the situation; but still his answer to the important and unlooked-for question, "Did the candidate understand drawing?" was answered in the negative. The Professor, indeed, added his opinion, that such an accomplishment was neither to be desired nor expected in a student of theology; but, pressed hard with this condition as a *sine qua non*, he at length did remember a dreaming lad about the Hall, who seldom could be got to speak above his breath, even when delivering his essays, but was said to have a strong turn for drawing. This was enough for my Lord Bidmore, who contrived to obtain a sight of some of young Cargill's sketches, and was satisfied that, under such a tutor, his son

could not fail to maintain that character for hereditary taste which his father and grandfather had acquired at the expense of a considerable estate, the representative value of which was now the painted canvass in the great gallery at Bidmore-House.

Upon following up the inquiry concerning the young man's character, he was found to possess all the other necessary qualifications of learning and morals, in a greater degree than perhaps Lord Bidmore might have required; and, to the astonishment of his fellow-students, but more especially to his own, Josiah Cargill was promoted to the desired and desirable situation of private tutor to the Honourable Mr Bidmore.

Mr Cargill did his duty ably and conscientiously, by a spoiled though good-humoured lad, of weak health and very ordinary parts. He could not, indeed, inspire into him any portion of the deep and noble enthusiasm which characterizes the youth of genius; but his pupil made such progress in each branch of his studies as his capacity enabled him to attain. He

understood the learned languages, and could be very learned on the subject of various readings—he pursued science, and could class shells, pack mosses, and arrange minerals—he drew without taste, but with much accuracy; and although he attained no commanding height in any pursuit, he knew enough of many studies, literary and scientific, to fill up his time, and divert from temptation a head which was none of the strongest in point of resistance.

Miss Augusta Bidmore, his lordship's only other child, received also the instructions of Cargill in such branches of science as her father chose she should acquire, and her tutor was capable to teach. But her progress was as different from that of her brother, as the fire of heaven differs from that grosser element which the peasant piles upon his smouldering hearth. Her acquirements in Italian and Spanish literature, in history, in drawing, and in all elegant learning, were such as to enchant her teacher, while at the same time it kept him on the stretch, lest, in her successful career, the scholar should outstrip the master.

Alas! such intercourse, fraught as it is with dangers arising out of the best and kindest, as well as the most natural feelings on either side, proved in the present, as in many other instances, fatal to the peace of the preceptor. Every feeling heart will excuse a weakness which we will presently find carried with it its own severe punishment. Cadenus, indeed, believe him who will, has assured us, that, in such a perilous intercourse, he himself preserved the limits which were unhappily transgressed by the unfortunate Vanessa, his more impassioned pupil.—

> The innocent delight he took
> To see the virgin mind her book,
> Was but the master's secret joy,
> In school to hear the finest boy.

But Josiah Cargill was less fortunate, or less cautious. He suffered his fair pupil to become inexpressibly dear to him, before he discovered the precipice towards which he was moving under the direction of a blind and misplaced passion. He was indeed utterly incapable of availing himself of the opportunities afforded by his situation, to involve his pupil in the toils of a mutual pas-

sion. Honour and gratitude alike forbade such a line of conduct, even had it been consistent with the natural bashfulness, simplicity, and innocence of his disposition. To sigh and suffer in secret, to form resolutions of separating himself from a situation so fraught with danger, and to postpone from day to day the accomplishment of a resolution so prudent, was all to which the tutor found himself equal; and it is not improbable, that the veneration with which he regarded his patron's daughter, with the utter hopelessness of the passion which he nourished, tended to render his love yet more pure and disinterested.

At length, the line of conduct which reason had long since recommended, could no longer be the subject of procrastination. Mr Bidmore was destined to foreign travel for a twelvemonth, and Mr Cargill received from his patron the alternative of accompanying his pupil, or retiring upon a suitable provision, the reward of his past instructions. It can hardly be doubted which he preferred; for while he was with young Bidmore, he did not seem entirely separated from his sister. He was sure to hear of Augusta frequent-

ly, and to see some part, at least, of the letters which she was to write to her brother; he might also hope to be remembered in these letters as her "good friend and tutor;" and to these consolations his quiet, contemplative, and yet enthusiastic disposition, clung as to a secret source of pleasure, the only one which life seemed to open to him.

But fate had a blow in store for him, which he had not anticipated. The chance of Augusta changing her maiden condition for that of a wife, probable as her rank, beauty, and fortune rendered such an event, had never once occurred to him; and although he had imposed upon himself the unwavering belief that she never could be his, he was inexpressibly affected by the intelligence that she had become the property of another.

The honourable Mr Bidmore's letters to his father soon after announced that poor Mr Cargill had been seized with a nervous fever, and again, that his reconvalescence was attended with so much debility, it seemed both of mind and body, as entirely to destroy his utility as a travelling

companion. Shortly after this the travellers separated, and Cargill returned to his native country alone, indulging upon the road in a melancholy abstraction of mind, which he had suffered to grow upon him since the mental shock which he had sustained, and which in time became the most characteristical feature of his demeanour. His meditations were not even disturbed by any anxiety about his future subsistence, although the cessation of his employment seemed to render that precarious. For this, however, Lord Bidmore had made provision; for, though a coxcomb where the fine arts were concerned, he was in other particulars a just and honourable man, who felt a sincere pride in having drawn the talents of Cargill from obscurity, and entertained due gratitude for the manner in which he had achieved the important task entrusted to him in his family.

His lordship had privately purchased from the Mowbray family the patronage or advowson of the living of Saint Ronan's, then held by a very old incumbent, who died shortly afterwards; so that upon arriving in England he found him-

self named to the vacant living. So indifferent, however, did Cargill feel himself towards this preferment, that he might not possibly have taken the trouble to go through the necessary steps previous to his ordination, had it not been on account of his mother, now a widow, and unprovided for, unless by the support which he afforded her. He visited her in her small retreat in the suburbs of Marchthorn, heard her pour out her gratitude to Heaven, that she should have been granted life enough to witness her son's promotion to a charge, which, in her eyes, was more honourable and desirable than an Episcopal see—heard her chalk out the life which they were to lead together in the humble independence which had thus fallen on him—he heard all this, and had no power to crush her hopes and her triumph by the indulgence of his own romantic feelings. He passed almost mechanically through the usual forms, and was inducted into the living of St Ronan's.

Although fanciful and romantic, it was not in Josiah Cargill's nature to yield to unavailing melancholy; yet he sought relief not in society,

but in solitary study. His seclusion was the more complete, that his mother, whose education had been as much confined as her fortunes, felt awkward under her new dignities, and willingly acquiesced in her son's secession from society, and spent her whole time in superintending the little household, and in her way providing for all emergencies, the occurrence of which might call Josiah out of his favourite book-room. As old age rendered her inactive, she began to regret the incapacity of her son to superintend his own household, and talked something of matrimony, and the mysteries of the muckle wheel. To these admonitions Mr Cargill returned only slight and evasive answers; and when the old lady slept in the village churchyard, at a reverend old age, there was no one to perform the office of superintendant in the minister's family. Neither did Josiah Cargill seek for any, but patiently submitted to all the evils with which a bachelor estate is attended, and which were at least equal to those which beset the renowned Mago-Pico during his state of celibacy. His butter was ill churned, and declared by all but himself and

the quean who made it, altogether uneatable; his milk was burnt in the pan, his fruit and vegetables were stolen, and his black stockings mended with blue and white thread.

For all these things the minister cared not, his mind ever bent upon far different matters. Do not let my fair readers do Josiah more than justice, or suppose that, like Beltenebros in the desert, he remained for years the victim of an unfortunate and misplaced passion. No—to the shame of the male sex be it spoken, that no degree of hopeless love, however desperate and sincere, can ever continue for years to embitter life. There must be hope—there must be uncertainty—there must be reciprocity, to enable the tyrant of the soul to secure a dominion of very long duration over a manly and well constituted mind, which is itself desirous to *will* its freedom. The memory of Augusta had long faded from Josiah's thoughts, or was remembered only as a pleasing, but melancholy and unsubstantial dream, while he was straining forward in pursuit of a yet nobler and coyer mistress, in a word, of Knowledge herself.

Every hour that he could spare from his parochial duties, which he discharged with zeal honourable to his heart and head, was devoted to his studies, and spent among his books. But this chase of wisdom, though in itself interesting and dignified, was indulged to an excess which diminished the respectability, nay, the utility, of the deceived student; and he forgot, amid the luxury of deep and dark investigations, that society has its claims, and that the knowledge which is unimparted, is necessarily a barren talent, and is lost to society, like the miser's concealed hoard, by the death of the proprietor. His studies also were under the additional disadvantage, that, being pursued for the gratification of a desultory longing after knowledge, and directed to no determined object, they turned on points rather curious than useful, and while they served for the amusement of the student himself, promised little utility to mankind at large.

Bewildered amid abstruse researches, metaphysical and historical, Mr Cargill, living only for himself and his books, acquired many ludicrous habits, which expose the secluded student to the

ridicule of the world, and which tinged, though they did not altogether obscure, the natural civility of an amiable disposition, as well as the acquired habits of politeness which he had learned in the good society that frequented Lord Bidmore's mansion. He not only indulged in neglect of dress and appearance, and all those ungainly tricks which men are apt to acquire by living very much alone, but besides, and especially, he became probably the most abstracted and absent man of a profession peculiarly liable to cherish such habits. No man fell so regularly into the painful dilemma of mistaking, or, in Scottish phrase, *miskenning* the person he spoke to, or more frequently inquired at an old maid after her husband, at a childless wife after her young people, at the distressed widower after the wife at whose funeral he himself had assisted but a fortnight before; and none was ever more familiar with strangers whom he had never seen, or seemed more estranged from those who had a title to think themselves well known to him. The worthy man perpetually confounded sex, age, and calling; and when a blind beggar extended his hand for charity, he has been known

to return the civility by taking off his hat, making a low bow, and hoping his worship was well.

Among his brethren, Mr Cargill alternately commanded respect by the depth of his erudition, and gave occasion to laughter from his odd peculiarities. On the latter occasions he used abruptly to withdraw from the ridicule he had provoked; for, notwithstanding the general mildness of his character, his solitary habits had engendered a testy impatience of contradiction, and a keener sense of pain, arising from the satire of others, than was natural to his unassuming character. As for his parishioners, they enjoyed, as may reasonably be supposed, many a hearty laugh at their pastor's expense, and were sometimes, as Mrs Dods hinted, more astonished than edified by his learning; for in pursuing a point of biblical criticism, he did not altogether remember that he was addressing a popular and unlearned assembly, not delivering a *concio ad clerum*—a mistake, not arising from any conceit of his learning, or wish to display it, but from the same absence of mind which induced an excellent di-

vine, when preaching before a party of criminals condemned to death, to break off by promising the wretches, who were to suffer next morning, "the rest of the discourse at the first proper opportunity." But all the neighbourhood acknowledged Mr Cargill's serious and devout discharge of his ministerial duties; and the poorer parishioners forgave his innocent peculiarities, in consideration of his unbounded charity; while the heritors, if they ridiculed the abstractions of Mr Cargill on some subjects, had the grace to recollect that they had prevented him from suing an augmentation of stipend, according to the fashion of the clergy around him, or from demanding at their hands a new manse, or the repair of the old one. He once, indeed, wished that they would amend the roof of his book-room, which "rained in" in a very pluvious manner; but receiving no direct answer from our friend Micklewham, who neither relished the proposal nor saw means of eluding it, the minister quietly made the necessary repairs at his own expense, and gave the heritors no farther trouble on the subject.

Such was the worthy divine whom our *bon vivant* at the Cleikum Inn hoped to conciliate by a good dinner and Cockburn's particular; an excellent menstruum in most cases, but not likely to be very efficacious on the present occasion.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE ACQUAINTANCE.

'Twixt us thus the difference trims :—
Using head instead of limbs,
You have read what I have seen ;
Using limbs instead of head,
I have seen what you have read—
Which way does the balance lean ?

BUTLER.

OUR traveller, rapid in all his resolutions and motions, strode stoutly down the street, and arrived at the Manse, which was, as we have already described it, all but absolutely ruinous. The total desolation and want of order about the door, would have argued the place uninhabited, had it not been for two or three miserable tubs with suds, or such like sluttish contents, which were left there, that those who broke their shins among them might receive a sensible proof, that "here the hand of woman had been." The door

being half off its hinges, the entrance was for the time protected by a broken harrow, which must necessarily be removed before entry could be obtained. The little garden, which might have given an air of comfort to the old house had it been kept in any order, was abandoned to a desolation, of which that of the sluggard was only a type; and the minister's man, an attendant always proverbial for doing half work, and who seemed in the present instance to do none, was seen among docks and nettles, solacing himself with the few gooseberries which remained on some moss-grown bushes. To him Mr Touchwood called loudly, inquiring after his master; but the clown, conscious of being taken in flagrant delict, as the law says, fled from him like a guilty thing, instead of obeying his summons, and was soon heard *hupping* and *jeeing* to the cart, which he had left on the other side of the broken wall.

Disappointed in his application to the man-servant, Mr Touchwood knocked with his cane, at first gently, then harder, hollowed, bellowed, and shouted, in hope of calling the attention of some

one within doors, but received not a word in reply. At length, thinking that no trespass could be committed upon so forlorn and deserted an establishment, he removed the obstacles to entrance with such a noise as he thought must necessarily have alarmed some one, if there was any live person about the house at all. All was still silent; and, entering a passage where the damp walls and broken flags corresponded to the appearance of things without doors, he opened a door to the left, which, wonderful to say, still had a latch remaining, and found himself in the parlour, and in the presence of the person whom he came to visit.

Amid a heap of books and other literary lumber, which had accumulated around him, sat, in his well-worn leathern elbow-chair, the learned minister of St Ronan's; a thin, spare man, beyond the middle age, of a dark complexion, but with eyes which, though now obscured and vacant, had been once bright, soft, and expressive, and whose features seemed interesting, the rather that, notwithstanding the carelessness of his dress, he was in the habit of performing his ablutions

with eastern precision; for he had forgot neatness, but not cleanliness. His hair might have appeared much more disorderly, had it not been thinned by time, and disposed chiefly around the sides of his countenance and the back part of his head; black stockings, ungartered, marked his professional dress, and his feet were thrust into the old slip-shod shoes, which served him instead of slippers. The rest of his garments, so far as visible, consisted in a plaid night-gown wrapt in long folds round his stooping and emaciated length of body, and reaching down to the slippers aforesaid. He was so intently engaged in studying the book before him, a folio of no ordinary bulk, that he totally disregarded the noise which Mr Touchwood made in entering the room, as well as the coughs and hems with which he thought proper to announce his presence.

No notice being taken of these inarticulate signals, Mr Touchwood, however great an enemy he was to ceremony, saw the necessity of introducing his business, as an apology for his intrusion.

"Hem! sir—Ha, hem!—you see before you a

person in some distress for want of society, who has taken the liberty to call on you as a good pastor, who may be, in Christian charity, willing to afford him a little of your company, since he is tired of his own."

Of this speech Mr Cargill only understood the words "distress" and "charity," sounds with which he was well acquainted, and which never failed to produce some effect on him. He looked at his visitor with lack-lustre eye, and, without correcting the first opinion which he had formed, although the stranger's plump and sturdy frame, as well as his nicely-brushed coat, glancing cane, and, above all, his upright and self-satisfied manner, resembled in no respect the dress, form, or bearing of a mendicant, he quietly thrust a shilling into his hand, and relapsed into the studious contemplation which the entrance of Mr Touchwood had interrupted.

"Upon my word, my good sir," said his visitor, surprised at a degree of absence of mind which he could hardly have conceived possible, "you have entirely mistaken my object."

"I am sorry my mite is insufficient, my

friend," said the clergyman, without again raising his eyes, "it is all I have at present to bestow."

"If you will have the kindness to look up for a moment, my good sir," said the traveller, "you may possibly perceive that you labour under a considerable mistake."

Mr Cargill raised his head, recalled his attention, and, seeing that he had a well-dressed, respectable looking person before him, he exclaimed in much confusion, "Ha!—yes—on my word, I was so immersed in my book—I believe—I think I have the pleasure to see my worthy friend, Mr Lavender?"

"No such thing, Mr Cargill," replied Mr Touchwood. "I will save you the trouble of trying to recollect me—you never saw me before. —But do not let me disturb your studies—I am in no hurry, and my business can wait your leisure."

"I am much obliged," said Mr Cargill; "have the goodness to take a chair, if you can find one —I have a train of thought to recover—a slight calculation to finish—and then I am at your command."

The visitor found among the broken furniture, not without difficulty, a seat strong enough to support his weight, and sat down, resting upon his cane, and looking attentively at his host, who very soon became totally insensible of his presence. A long pause of total silence ensued, only disturbed by the rustling leaves of the folio from which Mr Cargill seemed to be making extracts, and now and then by a little exclamation of surprise and impatience, when he dipped his pen, as happened once or twice, into his snuff-box, instead of the ink-standish which stood beside it. At length, just as Mr Touchwood began to think the scene as tedious as it was singular, the abstracted student raised his head, and spoke as if in soliloquy, "From Acon, Accor, or St John D'Acre, to Jerusalem, how far?"

"Twenty-three miles north north-west," answered his visitor, without hesitation.

Mr Cargill expressed no more surprise than if he had found the distance on the map, and, indeed, was not probably aware of the medium through which his question had been solved; and it was the tenor of the answer alone which he at-

tended to in his reply.—" Twenty-three miles—Ingulphus," laying his hand on the volume, " and Jeffrey Winesauf do not agree in this."

" They may both be d—d, then, for blockheads," answered the traveller.

" You might have contradicted their authority without using such an expression," said the divine gravely.

" I cry you mercy, Doctor," said Mr Touchwood; " but would you compare these parchment fellows with me, that have made my legs my compasses over great part of the inhabited world?"

" You have been in Palestine, then?" said Mr Cargill, drawing himself upright in his chair, and speaking with eagerness and with interest.

" You may swear that, Doctor, and at Acre too. Why, I was there the month after Boney had found it too hard a nut to crack.—I dined with Sir Sydney's chum, old Djezzar Pacha, and an excellent dinner we had, but for a dessert of noses and ears brought on after the last remove, which spoiled my digestion. Old Djezzar thought it so good a joke, that you hardly saw a man in Acre whose face was not as flat as the palm of

my hand—Gad, I respect my olfactory organ, and set off the next morning as fast as the most cursed hard-trotting dromedary that ever fell to poor pilgrim's lot could contrive to tramp."

"If you have really been in the Holy Land, sir," said Mr Cargill, whom the reckless gaiety of Mr Touchwood's manner rendered somewhat suspicious of a trick, "you will be able materially to enlighten me on the subject of the Crusades."

"They happened before my time, Doctor," replied the traveller.

"You are to understand that my curiosity refers to the geography of the countries where these events took place," answered Mr Cargill.

"O! as to that matter, you are lighted on your feet," said Mr Touchwood; "for the time present I can fit. Turk, Arab, Copt, and Druse, I know every one of them, and can make you as well acquainted with them as myself. Without stirring a step beyond your threshold, you shall know Syria as well as I do.—But one good turn deserves another—in that case, you must have the goodness to dine with me."

"I go seldom abroad, sir," said the minister, with a good deal of hesitation, for his habits of solitude and seclusion could not be entirely overcome, even by the expectation raised by the traveller's discourse; "yet I cannot deny myself the pleasure of waiting on a gentleman possessed of so much experience."

"Well then," said Mr Touchwood, "three be the hour—I never dine later, and always to a minute—and the place, the Cleikum Inn, up the way; where Mrs Dods is at this moment busy in making ready such a dinner as your learning has seldom seen, Doctor, for I brought the receipts from the four different quarters of the globe."

Upon this treaty they parted; and Mr Cargill, after musing for a short while upon the singular chance which had sent a living man to answer those doubts for which he was in vain consulting ancient authorities, at length resumed, by degrees, the train of reflection and investigation which Mr Touchwood's visit had interrupted, and in a short time lost all recollection of his episodical visitor, and of the engagement which he had formed.

Not so Mr Touchwood, who, when not occupied with business of real importance, had the art, as the reader may have observed, to make a prodigious fuss about nothing at all. Upon the present occasion, he bustled in and out of the kitchen, till Mrs Dods lost patience, and threatened to pin the dishclout to his tail; a menace which he pardoned, in consideration, that in all the countries which he had visited, which are sufficiently civilized to boast of cooks, these artists, toiling in their fiery element, have a privilege to be testy and impatient. He therefore retreated from the torrid region of Mrs Dods's microcosm, and employed his time in the usual devices of loiterers, partly by walking for an appetite, partly by observing the progress of his watch towards three o'clock, when he had happily succeeded in getting one. His table, in the blue parlour, was displayed with two covers, after the fairest fashion of the Cleikum Inn; yet the landlady, with a look "civil but sly," contrived to insinuate a doubt whether the clergyman would come, "when a' was dune."

Mr Touchwood scorned to listen to such

an insinuation until the fated hour arrived, and brought with it no Mr Cargill. The impatient entertainer allowed five minutes for difference of clocks, and variation of time, and other five for the procrastination of one who went little into society. But no sooner were the last five minutes expended, than he darted off for the Manse, not, indeed, much like a greyhound or a deer, but with the momentum of a corpulent and well-appetized elderly gentleman, who is in haste to secure his dinner. He bounced without ceremony into the parlour, where he found the worthy divine, clothed in the same plaid night-gown, and seated in the very elbow-chair in which he had left him five hours before. His sudden entrance recalled to Mr Cargill, not an accurate, but something of a general recollection, of what had passed in the morning, and he hastened to apologize with "Ha!—indeed—already?—upon my word, Mr A—a—, I mean my dear friend—I am afraid I have used you ill—I forgot to order any dinner—but we will do our best.—Eppie—Eppie!"

Not at the first, second, nor third call, but

*ex intervallo*, as the lawyers express it, Eppie, a bare-legged, shock-headed, thick-ankled, red-armed wench, entered, and announced her presence by an emphatic "What's your wull?"

"Have you got anything in the house for dinner, Eppie?"

"Naething but bread and milk, plenty o't—what should I have?"

"You see, sir," said Mr Cargill, "you are like to have a Pythagorean entertainment; but you are a traveller, and have doubtless been in your time thankful for bread and milk."

"But never when there was anything better to be had," said Mr Touchwood. "Come, Doctor, I beg your pardon, but your wits are fairly gone a wool-gathering; it was *I* invited *you* to dinner, up at the Inn yonder, not you me."

"On my word, and so it was," said Mr Cargill; "I knew I was quite right—I knew there was a dinner engagement betwixt us, I was sure of that, and that is the main point.—Come, sir, I wait upon you."

"Will you not first change your dress?" said

the visitor, seeing with astonishment that the divine proposed to attend him in his plaid nightgown; "why, we shall have all the boys in the village after us—you will look an owl in sunshine, and they will flock round you like so many hedge-sparrows."

"I will get my clothes instantly," said the worthy clergyman; "I will get ready directly—I am really ashamed to keep you waiting, my dear Mr—eh—eh—your name has this instant escaped me."

"It is Touchwood, sir, at your service; I do not believe you ever heard it before," answered the traveller.

"True—right—no more I have—well, my good Mr Touchstone, will you sit down an instant until we see what we can do?—strange slaves we make ourselves to these bodies of ours, Mr Touchstone—the clothing and the sustaining of them costs us much thought and leisure, which might be better employed in catering for the wants of our immortal spirits."

Mr Touchwood thought in his heart that ne-

ver had Bramin or Gymnosophist less reason to reproach himself with excess in the indulgence of the table, or of the toilette, than the sage before him; but he assented to the doctrine, as he would have done to any minor heresy, rather than protract matters by farther discussing the point at present. In a short time the minister was dressed in his Sunday's suit, without any farther mistake than turning one of his black stockings inside out; and Mr Touchwood, happy as was Boswell when he carried off Dr Johnson in triumph to dine with Strahan and John Wilkes, had the pleasure of escorting him to the Cleikum Inn.

In the course of the afternoon they became more familiar, and the familiarity led to their forming a considerable estimate of each other's powers and acquirements. It is true, the traveller thought the student too pedantic, too much attached to systems, which, formed in solitude, he was unwilling to renounce, even when contradicted by the voice and testimony of experience; and, moreover, considered his utter inattention to the quality of what he eat and drank,

as unworthy of a rational, that is, of a cooking creature, or of a being, who, as defined by Johnson, holds his dinner the most important business of the day. Cargill did not act up to this definition, and was, therefore, in the eyes of his new acquaintance, so far ignorant and uncivilized. What then? He was still a sensible, intelligent man, however abstemious and bookish.

On the other hand, the divine could not help regarding his new friend as something of an epicure or belly-god, nor could he observe in him either the perfect education, or the polished bearing, which mark the gentleman of rank, and of which, while he mingled with the world, he had become a competent judge. Neither did it escape him, that in the catalogue of Mr Touchwood's defects, occurred that of many travellers, a slight disposition to exaggerate his own personal adventures, and to prose concerning his own exploits. But then his acquaintance with Eastern manners, existing now in the same state in which they existed during the time of the Crusades, formed a living commentary on the works of William of Tyre, Raymund of Saint Giles, the

Moslem annals of Abulfaragi, and other historians of the dark period, with which his studies were at present occupied.

A friendship, a companionship at least, was therefore struck up hastily betwixt these two originals; and to the astonishment of the whole parish of St Ronan's, the minister thereof was seen once more leagued and united with an individual of his species, generally called among them the Cleikum Nabob. Their intercourse sometimes consisted in long walks, which they took in company, traversing, however, as limited a space of ground, as if it had been actually roped in for their pedestrian exercise. Their parade was, according to circumstances, a low haugh at the nether end of the ruinous hamlet, or the esplanade in the front of the old castle; and, in either case, the direct longitude of their promenade never exceeded a hundred yards. Sometimes, too, though rarely, the divine took share of Mr Touchwood's meal, though less splendidly set forth than when he was first invited to partake

of it; for, like the ostentatious owner of the gold cup in Parnell's Hermit,

——"Still he welcomed, but with less of cost."

On these occasions, the conversation was not of the regular and compacted nature, which passes betwixt men, as they are ordinarily termed, of this world. On the contrary, the one party was often thinking of Saladin and Cœur de Lion, when the other was haranguing on Hyder Ali and Sir Eyre Coote. Still, however, the one spoke, and the other seemed to listen; and, perhaps, the lighter intercourse of society, where amusement is the sole object, can scarcely rest on a safer basis.

It was upon one of the evenings when the learned divine had taken his place at Mr Touchwood's social board, or rather at Mrs Dods's,—for a cup of excellent tea, the only luxury which Mr Cargill continued to partake of with some complacence, was the regale before them,—when a card was delivered to the Nabob.

"Mr and Miss Mowbray see company at

Shaws-Castle on the twentieth current, at two o'clock—a dejeuner—dresses in character admitted—A dramatic picture."—"See company? the more fools they," he continued, by way of comment. "See company?—choice phrases are ever commendable—and this piece of pasteboard is to intimate that one may go and meet all the fools of the parish, if they have a mind—in my time they asked the honour, or the pleasure, of a stranger's company. I suppose, by and by, we shall have in this country the ceremonial of a Bedouin's tent, where every ragged Hadgi, with his green turban, comes in slap without leave asked, and has his black paw among the rice, with no other apology than Salam Alicum.—'Dresses in character—Dramatic picture'—what new Tomfoolery can that be?—but it does not signify.—Doctor! I say, Doctor!—but he is in the seventh heaven—I say, Mother Dods, you who know all the news—Is this the feast that was put off until Miss Mowbray should be better?"

"Troth is it, Maister Touchwood—they are no in the way of giving twa entertainments in one

season—no very wise to gie ane maybe—but they ken best."

"I say, Doctor, Doctor!—D—n him, he is charging the Moslemah with stout King Richard—I say, Doctor, do you know anything of these Mowbrays?"

"Nothing extremely particular," answered Mr Cargill, after a pause; "it is an ordinary tale of greatness, which blazes in one century, and is extinguished in the next. I think Camden says, that Thomas Mowbray, who was Grand-Marshall of England, succeeded to that high office, as well as to the Dukedom of Norfolk, as grandson of Roger Bigot, in 1301."

"Pshaw, man, you are back into the 14th century—I mean these Mowbrays of St Ronan's—now, don't fall asleep again until you have answered my question—and don't look so like a startled hare—I am speaking no treason."

The clergyman floundered a moment, as is usual with an absent man who is recovering the train of his ideas, or a somnambulist, when he is suddenly awakened, and then answered, still with hesitation.

"Mowbray of St Ronan's?—ha—eh—I know—that is—I did know the family."

"Here they are going to give a masquerade, a bal parée, private theatricals, I think, and what not," handing him the card.

"I saw something of this a fortnight ago," said Mr Cargill; "indeed, I either had a ticket myself, or I saw such a one as that."

"Are you sure you did not attend the party, Doctor?" said the Nabob.

"Who attend? I? you are jesting, Mr Touchwood."

"But are you quite positive?" demanded Mr Touchwood, who had observed, to his infinite amusement, that the learned and abstracted scholar was so conscious of his own peculiarities, as never to be very sure on any such subject.

"Positive!" he repeated with embarrassment; "my memory is so wretched that I never like to be positive—but had I done anything so far out of my usual way, I must have remembered it, one would think—and—I *am* positive I was not there."

"Neither could you, Doctor," said the Na-

bob, laughing at the process by which his friend reasoned himself into confidence; "for it did not take place—it was adjourned, and this is the second invitation—there will be one for you, as you had a card to the former.—Come, Doctor, you must go—you and I will go together—I as an Imaun—I can say my Bismillah with any Hadgi of them all—You as a cardinal, or what you like best."

"Who, I?—it is unbecoming my station, Mr Touchwood," said the clergyman—"a folly altogether inconsistent with my habits."

"All the better—you shall change your habits."

"You had better gang up and see them, Mr Cargill," said Mrs Dods; "for it's maybe the last sight ye may see of Miss Mowbray—they say she is to be married and off to England ane of thae odd-come-shortlies, wi' some of the gowks about the Waal down bye."

"Married!" said the clergyman; "it is impossible!"

"But where's the impossibility, Mr Cargill, when ye see folk marry every day, and buckle

them yoursell into the bargain?—Maybe ye think the puir lassie has a bee in her bannet; but ye ken yoursell if naebody but wise folk were to marry, the warld wad be ill peopled. I think it's the wise folk that keep single, like yoursell and me, Mr Cargill.—Gude guide us!—are ye weel?—will ye taste a drap o' something?"

"Sniff at my ottar of roses," said Mr Touchwood; "the scent would revive the dead—why, what in the devil's name is the meaning of this?—you were quite well just now."

"A sudden qualm," said Mr Cargill, recovering himself.

"Oh! Mr Cargill," said Dame Dods, "this comes of your lang fasts."

"Right, dame," subjoined Mr Touchwood; "and of breaking them with sour milk and pease bannock—the least morsel of Christian food is rejected by the stomach, just as a small gentleman refuses the visit of a creditable neighbour, lest he see the nakedness of the land—ha! ha!"

"And there is really a talk of Miss Mowbray of St Ronan's being married?" said the clergyman.

"Troth is there," said the dame; "it's Trotting Nelly's news; and though she likes a drappie, I dinna think she would invent a lee or carry ane—at least to me, that am a gude customer."

"This must be looked to," said Mr Cargill, as if speaking to himself.

"In troth, and so it should," said Dame Dods; "it's a sin and a shame if they should employ the tinkling cymbal they ca' Chatterley, and sic a presbyterian trumpet as yoursell in the land, Mr Cargill; and if ye will take a fule's advice, ye winna let the multure be taen by your ain mill, Mr Cargill."

"True, true, good Mother Dods," said the Nabob; "gloves and hat-bands are things to be looked after, and Mr Cargill had better go down to this cursed festivity with me, in order to see after his own interest."

"I must speak with the young lady," said the clergyman, still in a brown study.

"Right, right, my boy of blackletter," said the Nabob; "with me you shall go, and we'll bring them to submission to mother-church, I warrant

you—Why, the idea of being cheated in such a way, would scare a Santon out of his trance.—What dress will you wear?"

"My own, to be sure," said the divine, starting from his reverie.

"True, thou art right again—they may want to knit the knot on the spot, and who would be married by a parson in masquerade?—We go to the entertainment though—it is a done thing."

The clergyman assented, provided he should receive an invitation; and as that was found at the Manse, he had no excuse for retracting, even if he had seemed to desire one.

## CHAPTER V.

### FORTUNE'S FROLICS.

*Count Basset.* We gentlemen, whose carriages run on the four aces, are apt to have a wheel out of order.

*The Provoked Husband.*

Our history must now look a little backwards; and although it is rather foreign to our natural style of composition, it must speak more in narrative, and less in dialogue, rather telling what happened, than its effects upon the actors. Our promise, however, is only conditional, for we foresee temptations which may render it difficult for us exactly to keep it.

The arrival of the young Earl of Etherington at the salutiferous fountain of St Ronan's had produced the strongest sensation; especially, as

it was joined with the singular accident of the attempt upon his lordship's person, as he took a short cut through the woods upon foot, at a distance from his equipage and servants. The gallantry with which he beat off the highwayman, was only equal to his generosity; for he declined making any researches after the poor devil, although he had received a severe wound in the scuffle.

Of the "three black Graces," as they have been termed by one of the most pleasant companions of our time, Law and Physic hastened to do homage to Lord Etherington, represented by Mr Micklewham and Dr Quackleben, while Divinity, as favourable, though more coy, in the person of the Reverend Mr Simon Chatterley, stood on tiptoe to offer any service in her power.

For the honourable reason already assigned, his lordship, after thanking Mr Micklewham, and hinting, that he might have different occasion for his services, declined his offer to search out the delinquent by whom he had been wounded; while to the care of the Doctor he subjected the cure of a smart flesh-wound in the arm,

together with a slight scratch on the temple; and so very genteel was his behaviour on the occasion, that the Doctor, in his anxiety for his safety, enjoined him a month's course of the waters, if he would enjoy the comfort of a complete and perfect recovery. Nothing so frequent, he could assure his lordship, as the opening of cicatrized wounds; and the waters of St Ronan's spring being, according to Dr Quackleben, a remedy for all the troubles which flesh is heir to, could not fail to equal those of Barege, in facilitating the discharge of all splinters or extraneous matter, which a bullet may chance to incorporate with the human frame, to its great annoyance. For he was wont to say, that although he could not declare the waters which he patronized to be an absolute *panphamarcon*, yet he would with word and pen maintain, that they possessed the principal virtues of the most celebrated medicinal springs in the known world. In short, the love of Alpheus for Arethusa was a mere jest, compared to that which the Doctor entertained for his favourite fountain.

The new and noble guest, whose arrival so

much illustrated these scenes of convalescence and of gaiety, was not at first seen so much at the ordinary, and other places of public resort, as had been the hope of the worthy company assembled. His health and his wound proved an excuse for making his visits to the society few and far between.

But when he did appear, his manners and person were infinitely captivating; and even the carnation-coloured silk-handkerchief, which suspended his wounded arm, together with the paleness and languor which loss of blood had left on his handsome and open countenance, gave a grace to the whole person, which many of the ladies declared irresistible. All contended for his notice, attracted at once by his affability, and piqued by the calm and easy nonchalance with which it seemed to be blended. The scheming and selfish Mowbray, the coarse-minded and brutal Sir Bingo, accustomed to consider themselves, and to be considered, as the first men of the party, sunk into comparative insignificance. But chiefly Lady Penelope threw out the captivations of her wit and her literature; while

Lady Binks, trusting to her natural charms, endeavoured equally to attract his notice. The other nymphs of the Spaw held a little back, upon the principle of that politeness, which, at continental hunting parties, affords the first shot at a fine piece of game, to the person of the highest rank present; but the thought throbbed in many a fair bosom, that their ladyships might miss their aim, in spite of the advantages thus allowed them, and that there might then be room for less exalted, but perhaps not less skilful, markswomen, to try their skill.

But while the Earl thus withdrew from public society, it was necessary, at least natural, that he should choose some one with whom to share the solitude of his own apartment; and Mowbray, superior in rank to the half-pay whisky-drinking Captain MacTurk; in dash to Winterblossom, who was broken down, and turned twaddle; and in tact and sense to Sir Bingo Binks, easily manœuvred himself into his lordship's more intimate society; and internally thanking the honest footpad, whose bullet had been the indirect means of secluding his intended victim from all society but

his own, he gradually began to feel the way, and prove the strength of his antagonist, at the various games of skill and hazard which he introduced, apparently with the sole purpose of relieving the tædium of a sick-chamber.

Micklewham, who felt, or affected, the greatest possible interest in his patron's success, and who watched every opportunity to inquire how his schemes advanced, received at first such favourable accounts as made him grin from ear to ear, rub his hands, and chuckle forth such bursts of glee as only the success of triumphant roguery could have extorted from him. Mowbray looked grave, however, and checked his mirth.

"There was something in it after all," he said, "that he could not perfectly understand.—Etherington, an used hand—d—d sharp—up to everything, and yet he lost his money like a baby."

"And what the matter how he loses it, so you win it like a man?" said his legal friend and adviser.

"Why, hang it, I cannot tell," replied Mowbray—"were it not that I think he has scarce the impudence to propose such a thing to suc-

ceed, curse me but I should think he was coming the old soldier over me, and keeping up his game. —But no—he can scarce have the impudence to think of that.—I find, however, he has done Wolverine—cleaned out poor Tom—though Tom wrote to me the precise contrary, yet the truth has since come out—Well, I shall avenge him, for I see his lordship is to be had as well as other folks."

"Weel, Mr Mowbray," said the lawyer, in a tone of affected sympathy, "ye ken your own ways best—but the heavens will bless a moderate mind. I would not like to see you ruin this poor lad *funditus*, that is to say, out and out.—To lose some of the ready will do him no great harm, and maybe give him a lesson he may be the better of as long as he lives—but I wad not, as an honest man, wish you to go deeper—you should spare the lad, Mr Mowbray."

"Who spared *me*, Micklewham?" said Mowbray, with a look and tone of deep emphasis—"No, no—he must go through the mill—money and money's worth.—His seat is called Oakendale—think of that, Mick—Oakendale! Oh,

name of thrice happy augury!—Speak not of mercy, Mick—the squirrels of Oakendale must be dismounted, and learn to go a-foot.—What mercy can the wandering lord of Troy expect among the Greeks?—The Greeks!—I am a very Suliote—the bravest of Greeks.

> I think not of pity, I think not of fear,
> He neither must know who would serve the Vizier.

And necessity, Mick," he concluded, with a tone something altered, "necessity is as unrelenting a leader as any Vizier or Pacha, whom Scanderbeg ever fought with, or Byron has sung."

Micklewham echoed his patron's ejaculation with a sound betwixt a whine, a chuckle, and a groan; the first being designed to express his pretended pity for the destined victim; the second, his sympathy with his patron's prospects of success; and the third being a whistle admonitory of the dangerous courses through which his object was to be pursued.

Suliote as he boasted himself, Mowbray had, soon after this conversation, some reason to admit, that,

> When Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug of war.

The light skirmishing betwixt the parties was ended, and the serious battle commenced with some caution on either side; each perhaps desirous of being master of his opponent's system of tactics, before exposing his own. Piquet, the most beautiful game at which a man can make sacrifice of his fortune, was one at which Mowbray had, for his misfortune perhaps, been accounted, from an early age, a great proficient, and in which the Earl of Etherington, with less experience, proved no novice. They now played for such stakes as Mowbray's state of fortune rendered considerable to him, though his antagonist appeared not to regard the amount. And they played with various success; for, though Mowbray at times returned with a smile of confidence the inquiring looks of his friend Micklewham, there were other occasions on which he seemed to evade them, as if his own had a sad confession to make in reply.

These alternations, though frequent, did not occupy, after all, many days; for Mowbray, a friend of all hours, spent much of his time in Lord Etherington's apartment, and these few days were days of battle. In the meantime, as his lord-

ship was now sufficiently recovered to join the party at Shaws-Castle, and Miss Mowbray's health being announced as restored, that proposal was renewed, with the addition of a dramatic entertainment, the nature of which we shall afterwards have occasion to explain. Cards were anew issued to all those who had been formerly included in the invitation, and of course to Mr Touchwood, as formerly a resident at the Well, and now in the neighbourhood; it being previously agreed among the ladies, that a Nabob, though sometimes a dingy or damaged commodity, was not to be rashly or unnecessarily neglected. As to the parson, he had been asked, of course, as an old acquaintance of the Mowbray family, not to be left out when the friends of the family were invited on a great scale; but his habits were well known, and it was no more expected that he would leave his manse on such an occasion, than that the kirk should loosen itself from its foundations.

It was after these arrangements had been made, that the Laird of St Ronan's suddenly entered Micklewham's private apartment with looks of

exultation. The worthy scribe turned his spectacled nose towards his patron, and holding in one hand the bunch of papers which he had been just perusing, and in the other the tape with which he was about to tie them up again, suspended that operation to await with open eyes and ears the communication of Mowbray.

"I have done him!" he said, exultingly, yet in a tone of voice lowered almost to a whisper; "capotted his lordship for this bout—doubled my capital, Mick, and something more.—Hush, don't interrupt me—we must think of Clara now—she must share the sunshine, should it prove but a blink before a storm.—You know, Mick, these two d—d women have settled that they will have something like a *bal parée* on this occasion, a sort of theatrical exhibition, and that those who like it shall be dressed in character.—I know their meaning—they think Clara has no dress fit for such foolery, and so they hope to eclipse her; Lady Pen, with her old-fashioned, ill-set diamonds, and my Lady Binks, with the new-fashioned finery which she swopt her character for. But Clara shan't be borne down so, by ——. I got that af-

fected slut, Lady Binks's maid, to tell me what her mistress had set her mind on, and she is to wear a Grecian habit, forsooth, like one of Will Allan's eastern subjects.—But here's the rub—there is only one shawl for sale in Edinburgh that is worth shewing off in, and that is at the Gallery of Fashion.—Now, Mick, that shawl must be had for Clara, with the other trangums of muslin and lace, and so forth, which you will find marked in the paper there.—Send instantly and secure it, for, as Lady Binks writes by to-morrow's post, your order can go by to-night's mail—There is a note for L.100."

From a mechanical habit of never refusing anything, Micklewham readily took the note, but, having looked at it through his spectacles, he continued to hold it in his hand as he remonstrated with his patron.—"This is a' very kindly meant, St Ronan's—very kindly meant; and I wad be the last to say that Miss Clara does not merit respect and kindness at your hand; but I doubt mickle if she would care a bodle for thae braw things. Ye ken yoursell, she seldom alters her fashions.—Odd, she thinks her riding-habit dress

aneugh for ony company; and if you were ganging by good looks, so it is—if she had a thought mair colour, poor dear."

"Well, well," said Mowbray, impatiently, "let me alone to reconcile a woman and a fine dress."

"To be sure, ye ken best," said the writer; "but, after a', now, wad it no be better to lay by this hundred pound in Tam Turnpenny's, in case the young lady should want it afterhand, just for a sair foot?"

"You are a fool, Mick; what signifies healing a sore foot, when there will be a broken heart in the case?—No, no—get the things as I desire you—we will blaze them down for one day at least, perhaps it will be the beginning of a proper dash."

"Weel, weel, I wish it may be so," answered Micklewham; "but this young Earl—hae ye found the weak point?—Can ye get a decerniture against him, with expenses?—that is the question."

"I wish I could answer it," said Mowbray, thoughtfully.—"Confound the fellow—he is a

cut above me in rank and in society too—belongs to the great clubs, and is in with the Superlatives and Inaccessibles, and all that sort of folk. —My training has been a peg lower—but, hang it, there are better dogs bred in the kennel than in the parlour. I am up to him, I think—at least I will soon know, Mick, whether I am or no, and that is always one comfort. Never mind—do you execute my commission, and take care you name no names—I must save my little Abigail's reputation."

They parted, Micklewham to execute his patron's commission—his patron to bring to the test those hopes, the uncertainty of which he could not disguise from his own sagacity.

Trusting to the continuance of his run of luck, Mowbray resolved to bring affairs to a crisis that same evening. Everything seemed in the outset to favour his purpose. They had dined together in Lord Etherington's apartments—his state of health interfered with the circulation of the bottle, and a drizzly autumnal evening rendered walking disagreeable, even had they gone no farther than the private stable where Lord Ether-

ington's horses were kept, under the care of a groom of superior skill. Cards were naturally, almost necessarily, resorted to, as the only alternative for helping away the evening, and piquet was, as formerly, chosen for the game.

Lord Etherington seemed at first indolently careless and indifferent about his play, suffering advantages to escape him, of which, in a more attentive state of mind, he could not have failed to avail himself. Mowbray upbraided him with his carelessness, and proposed a deeper stake, in order to interest him in the game. The young nobleman complied; and in the course of a few hands, the gamesters became both deeply engaged in watching and profiting by the changes of fortune. These were so many, so varied, and so unexpected, that the very souls of the players seemed at length centered in the event of the struggle; and, by dint of doubling stakes, the accumulated sum of a thousand pounds and upwards, upon each side, came to be staked in the issue of the game.—So large a risk included all those funds which Mowbray commanded by his sister's kindness, and nearly all his previous winnings,

so to him the alternative was victory or ruin. He could not hide his agitation, however desirous to do so. He drank wine to supply himself with courage—he drank water to cool his agitation; and at length bent himself to play with as much care and attention as he felt himself enabled to command.

In the first part of the game their luck appeared tolerably equal, and the play of both befitting gamesters who had dared to place such a sum on the cast. But, as it drew towards a conclusion, fortune altogether deserted him who stood most in need of her favour, and Mowbray, with silent despair, saw his fate depend on a single trick, and that with every odds against him, for Lord Etherington was elder hand. But how can Fortune's favour secure any one who is not true to himself?—By an infraction of the laws of the game, which could only have been expected from the veriest bungler that ever touched a card, Lord Etherington called a point without shewing it, and by the ordinary rule, Mowbray was entitled to count his own—and in the course of that and the next hand, gained the game and swept the

stakes. Lord Etherington shewed chagrin and displeasure, and seemed to think that the rigour of the game had been, more insisted upon than in courtesy ought to have been, when men were playing for so small a stake. Mowbray did not understand this logic. A thousand pounds, he said, were in his eyes no nut-shells; the rules of piquet were insisted on by all but boys and women; and for his part, he had rather not play at all than not play the game.

"So it would seem, my dear Mowbray," said the Earl; "for on my soul, I never saw so disconsolate a visage as thine during that unlucky game—it withdrew all my attention from my hand; and I may safely say, your rueful countenance has stood me in a thousand pounds. If I could transfer thy long visage to canvass, I should have both my revenge and my money; for a correct resemblance would be worth not a penny less than the original has cost me."

"You are welcome to your jest, my lord," said Mowbray, "it has been well paid for; and I will serve you in ten thousand at the same rate.—What say you?" he said, taking up and shuffling

the cards, "will you do yourself more justice in another game?—Revenge, they say, is sweet."

"I have no appetite for it this evening," said the Earl, gravely; "if I had, Mowbray, you might come by the worse. I do not *always* call a point without shewing it."

"Your lordship is out of humour with yourself for a blunder that might happen to any man—it was as much my good luck as a good hand would have been, and so Fortune be praised."

"But what if with this Fortune had nought to do?" replied Lord Etherington.—"What if, sitting down with an honest fellow and a friend like yourself, Mowbray, a man should rather choose to lose his own money, which he could afford, than to win what it might distress his friend to part with?"

"Supposing a case so far out of supposition, my lord—for, with submission, the allegation is easily made, and is totally incapable of proof—I should say, no one had a right to think for me in such a particular, or to suppose that I played for a higher stake than was convenient."

"And thus your friend, poor devil," replied

Lord Etherington, "would lose his money, and run the risk of a quarrel into the boot!—We will try it another way—Suppose this good-humoured and simple-minded gamester had a favour of the deepest import to ask of his friend, and judged it better to prefer his request to a winner than to a loser?"

"If this applies to me, my lord," replied Mowbray, "it is necessary I should learn how I can oblige your lordship."

"That is a word soon spoken, but so difficult to be recalled, that I am almost tempted to pause—but yet it must be said.—Mowbray, you have a sister."

Mowbray started.—"I have indeed a sister, my lord; but I can conceive no case in which her name can enter with propriety into our present discussion."

"Again in the menacing mood!" said Lord Etherington, in his former tone; "now, here is a pretty fellow—he would first cut my throat for having won a thousand pounds from me, and then for offering to make his sister a countess."

"A countess, my lord?" said Mowbray;

"you are but jesting—you have never even seen Clara Mowbray."

"Perhaps not—but what then?—I may have seen her picture, as Puff says in the Critic, or fallen in love with her from rumour—or, to save farther suppositions, as I see they render you impatient, I may be satisfied with knowing that she is a beautiful and accomplished young lady, with a large fortune."

"What fortune do you mean, my lord?" said Mowbray, recollecting with alarm some claims, which, according to Micklewham's view of the subject, his sister might form upon his property. —"What estate?—there is nothing belongs to our family, save these lands of St Ronan's, or what is left of them; and of these I am, my lord, an undoubted heir of entail in possession."

"Be it so," said the Earl, "for I have no claim on your mountain realms here, which are, doubtless,

> —— renown'd of old
> For knights, and squires, and barons bold;

my views respect a much richer, though less ro-

mantic domain—a large manor, hight Nettlewood-House, old, but standing in the midst of such glorious oaks—three thousand acres of land, arable, pasture, and woodland, exclusive of the two closes, occupied by Widow Hodge and Goodman Trampclod—manorial rights—mines and minerals—and the devil knows how many good things beside, all lying in the vale of Bever."

"And what has my sister to do with all this?" asked Mowbray, in great surprise.

"Nothing; but that it belongs to her when she becomes Countess of Etherington."

"It is, then, your lordship's property already?"

"No, by Jove! nor can it, unless your sister honours me with her approbation of my suit," replied the Earl.

"This is a sorer puzzle than one of Lady Penelope's charades, my lord," said Mr Mowbray; "I must call in the assistance of the Reverend Mr Chatterley."

"You shall not need," said Lord Etherington; "I will give you the key, but listen to me with patience.—You know that we nobles of

England, less jealous of our sixteen quarters than those on the continent, do not take scorn to line our decayed ermines with a little cloth of gold from the city; and my grandfather was lucky enough to get a wealthy wife, with a halting pedigree,—rather a singular circumstance, considering that her father was a countryman of yours. She had a brother, however, still more wealthy than herself, and who increased his fortune by continuing to carry on the trade which had first enriched his family. At length he summed up his books, washed his hands of commerce, and retired to Nettlewood, to become a gentleman; and here my much respected grand-uncle was seized with the rage of making himself a man of consequence. He tried what marrying a woman of family would do; but he soon found that whatever advantage his family might derive from his doing so, his own condition was but little illustrated. He next resolved to become a man of family himself. His father had left Scotland when very young, and bore, I blush to say, the vulgar name of Scrogie. This hapless dissyllable my uncle carried in person to the he-

rald office in Scotland; but neither Lyon, nor Marchmont, nor Islay, nor Snadoun, neither herald nor pursuivant, would patronize Scrogie. —Scrogie!—there could nothing be made out of it—so that my worthy relative had recourse to the surer side of the house, and began to found his dignity on his mother's name of Mowbray. In this he was much more successful, and I believe some sly fellow stole for him a slip from your own family tree, Mr Mowbray of St Ronan's, which, I dare say, you have never missed. At any rate, for his *argent* and *or*, he got a handsome piece of parchment, blazoned with a white lion for Mowbray, to be borne quarterly, with three stunted or scrog-bushes for Scrogie, and became thenceforth Mr Scrogie Mowbray, or rather, as he subscribed himself, Reginald (his former Christian name was Ronald,) S. Mowbray. He had a son who most undutifully laughed at all this, refused the honours of the high name of Mowbray, and insisted on retaining his father's original appellative of Scrogie, to the great annoyance of his said father's ears, and damage of his temper."

"Why, faith, betwixt the two," said Mowbray, "I own I should have preferred my own name, and I think the old gentleman's taste rather better than the young one's."

"True, but both were wilful, absurd originals, with a happy obstinacy of temper, whether derived from Mowbray or Scrogie I know not, but which led them so often into opposition, that the offended father, Reginald S. Mowbray, turned his recusant son Scrogie fairly out of doors; and the fellow would have paid for his plebeian spirit with a vengeance, had he not found refuge with a surviving partner of the original Scrogie of all, who still carried on the lucrative branch of traffic by which the family had been first enriched. I mention these particulars to account, in so far as I can, for the singular predicament in which I now find myself placed."

"Proceed, my lord," said Mr Mowbray; "there is no denying the singularity of your story, and I presume you are quite serious in giving me such an extraordinary detail."

"Entirely so, upon my honour—and a most serious matter it is, you will presently find. When

my worthy uncle, Mr S. Mowbray, (for I will not call him Scrogie even in the grave,) paid his debt to nature, everybody concluded he would be found to have disinherited his son, the unfilial Scrogie, and so far everybody was right—But it was also generally believed that he would settle the estate on my father, Lord Etherington, the son of his sister, and therein every one was wrong. For my excellent grand-uncle had pondered with himself, that the favoured name of Mowbray would take no advantage, and attain no additional elevation, if his estate of Nettlewood, (otherwise called Mowbray-Park,) should descend to our family without any condition; and with the assistance of a sharp attorney, he settled it on me, then a school-boy, *on condition* that I should, before attaining the age of twenty-five complete, take unto myself in holy wedlock a young lady of good fame, of the name of Mowbray, and, by preference, of the house of St Ronan's, should a damsel of that house exist.—Now my riddle is read."

"And a very extraordinary one it is," replied Mowbray, thoughtfully.

"Confess the truth," said Lord Etherington, laying his hand on his shoulder; "you think the story will bear a grain of a scruple of doubt, if not a whole scruple itself?"

"At least, my lord," answered Mowbray, "your lordship will allow, that, being Miss Mowbray's only near relation, and sole guardian, I may, without offence, pause upon a suit for her hand, made under such odd circumstances."

"If you have the least doubt either respecting my rank or fortune, I can give, of course, the most satisfactory references," said the Earl of Etherington.

"That I can easily believe, my lord," said Mowbray; "nor do I in the least fear deception, where detection would be so easy. Your lordship's proceedings towards me, too, (with a conscious glance at the bills he still held in his hand,) have, I admit, been such as to intimate some such deep cause of interest as you have been pleased to state. But it seems strange that your lordship should have permitted years to glide away, without so much as inquiring after

the young lady, who, I believe, is the only person qualified, as your grand-uncle's will requires, with whom you can form an alliance. It appears to me, that long before now, this matter ought to have been investigated; and that, even now, it would have been more natural and more decorous to have at least seen my sister before proposing for her hand."

"On the first point, my dear Mowbray," said Lord Etherington, "I am free to own to you, that, without meaning your sister the least affront, I would have got rid of this clause if I could; for every man would fain choose a wife for himself, and I feel no hurry to marry at all. But the rogue-lawyers, after taking fees, and keeping me in hand for years, have at length roundly told me the clause must be complied with, or Nettlewood must have another master. So I thought it best to come down here in person, in order to address the fair lady; but as accident has hitherto prevented my seeing her, and as I found in her brother a man who understands the world, I hope you will not

think the worse of me, that I have endeavoured in the outset to make you my friend. Truth is, I shall be twenty-five in the course of a month; and without your favour, and the opportunities which only you can afford me, that seems a short time to woo and win a lady of Miss Mowbray's merit."

"And what is the alternative if you do not form this proposed alliance, my lord?" said Mowbray.

"The bequest of my grand-uncle lapses," said the Earl, "and fair Nettlewood, with its old house, and older oaks, manorial rights, and all, devolves on a certain cousin-german of mine, whom Heaven of his mercy confound!"

"You have left yourself little time to prevent such an event, my lord," said Mowbray; "but things being as I now see them, you shall have what interest I can give you in the affair.—We must stand, however, on more equal terms, my lord—I will condescend so far as to allow it would have been inconvenient for me at this moment to have lost that game, but I cannot in the

circumstances think of acting as if I had fairly won it. We must draw stakes, my lord."

"Not a word of that, if you really mean me kindly, my dear Mowbray. The blunder was a real one, for I was thinking, as you may suppose, on other things than the shewing my point —All was fairly lost and won.—I hope I shall have opportunities of offering real services, which may perhaps give me some right to your partial regard—at present we are on an equal footing on all sides—perfectly so."

"If your lordship thinks so," said Mowbray,—and then passing rapidly to what he felt he could say with more confidence,—"Indeed, at any rate, no personal obligation to myself could prevent my doing my full duty as guardian to my sister."

"Unquestionably, I desire nothing else," replied the Earl of Etherington.

"I must therefore understand that your lordship quite serious in your proposal; and that it is not to be withdrawn, even if upon acquaintance with Miss Mowbray, you should not per-

haps think her so deserving of your lordship's attentions, as report may have spoken her."

"Mr Mowbray," replied the Earl, "the treaty between you and me shall be as definitive as if I were a sovereign prince, demanding in marriage the sister of a neighbouring sovereign, whom, according to royal etiquette, he neither has seen nor could see. I have been quite frank with you, and I have stated to you that my present motives for entering upon negotiation are not personal, but territorial; when I know Miss Mowbray, I have no doubt they will be otherwise. I have heard she is beautiful."

"Something of the palest, my lord," answered Mowbray.

"A fine complexion is the first attraction which is lost in the world of fashion, and that which it is easiest to replace."

"Dispositions, my lord, may differ," said Mowbray, "without faults on either side. I presume your lordship has inquired into my sister's. She is amiable, accomplished, sensible, and high-spirited; but yet——"

"I understand you, Mr Mowbray, and will spare you the pain of speaking out. I have heard Miss Mowbray is in some respects—particular; to use a broader word—a little whimsical. —No matter. She will have the less to learn when she becomes a countess, and a woman of fashion."

"Are you serious, my lord?" said Mowbray.

"I am—and I will speak my mind still more plainly. I have good temper, and excellent spirits, and can endure a good deal of singularity in those I live with. I have no doubt your sister and I will live happily together—But in case it should prove otherwise, arrangements may be made previously, which will enable us to live happily apart.—My own estate is large, and Nettlewood will bear dividing."

"Nay, then," said Mowbray, "I have little more to say—nothing indeed remains for inquiry, so far as your lordship is concerned.—But my sister must have free liberty of choice—so far as I am concerned, your lordship's suit has my interest."

"And I trust we may consider it as a done thing?"

"With Clara's approbation—certainly," answered Mowbray.

"I trust there is no chance of personal repugnance on the young lady's part?"

"I anticipate nothing of the kind, my lord, as I presume there is no reason for any; but young ladies will be capricious, and if Clara, after I have done and said all that a brother ought to do, should remain repugnant, there is a point in the exertion of my influence which it would be cruelty to pass."

The Earl of Etherington walked a turn through the apartment, then paused, and said, in a grave and doubtful tone, "In the meanwhile, I am bound, and the young lady is free, Mowbray. Is this quite fair?"

"It is what happens in every case, my lord, where a gentleman proposes for a lady," answered Mowbray; "he must remain, of course, bound by his offer, until, within a reasonable time, it is accepted or rejected. It is not my fault that your lordship has declared your wishes to me, before

ascertaining Clara's inclination. But as yet the matter is between ourselves—I make you welcome to draw back if you think proper. Clara Mowbray needs not push for a catch-match."

"Nor do I desire," said the young nobleman, "any time to re-consider the resolution which I have confided to you. I am not in the least fearful that I shall change my mind on seeing your sister, and I am ready to stand by the proposal which I have made to you.—If, however, you feel so extremely delicately on my account," he continued, "I can see and even converse with Miss Mowbray at this fete of yours, without the necessity of being at all presented to her—The character which I have assumed in a manner obliges me to wear a mask."

"Certainly," said the Laird of St Ronan's, "and I am glad, for both our sakes, your lordship thinks of taking a little law upon this occasion."

"I shall profit nothing by it," said the Earl; "my doom is fixed before I start—but if this mode of managing the matter will save your conscience, I have no objection to it—it cannot con-

sume much time, which is what I have to look to."

They then shook hands and parted, without any farther discourse which could interest the reader.

Mowbray was glad to find himself alone, in order to think over what had happened, and to ascertain the state of his own mind, which at present was puzzling even to himself. He could not but feel that much greater advantages of every kind might accrue to himself and his family from the alliance of the wealthy young Earl, than could have been derived from any share of his spoils which he had proposed to gain by superior address in play, or greater skill on the turf. But his pride was hurt when he recollected, that he had placed himself entirely in Lord Etherington's power; and the escape from absolute ruin which he had made, solely by the sufferance of his opponent, had nothing in it consolatory to his wounded feelings. He was lowered in his own eyes, when he recollected how completely the proposed victim of his ingenuity had seen through his schemes, and only abstained from baffling them

entirely, because to do so suited best with his own. There was a shade of suspicion, too, which he could not entirely eradicate from his mind.—What occasion had this young nobleman to preface, by the voluntary loss of a brace of thousands, a proposal which must have been acceptable in itself, without any such sacrifice? And why should he, after all, have been so eager to secure his accession to the proposed alliance, before he had even seen the lady who was the object of it? However hurried for time, he might have waited the event at least of the entertainment at Shaws-Castle, at which Clara was necessarily obliged to make her appearance?—Yet such conduct, however unusual, was equally inconsistent with any sinister intentions; since the sacrifice of a large sum of money, and the declaration of his views upon a portionless young lady of family, could scarcely be the preface to any unfair practice. So that, upon the whole, Mowbray settled, that what was uncommon in the Earl's conduct arose from the hasty and eager disposition of a rich young Englishman, to whom money is of little consequence, and who is too headlong in

pursuit of the favourite plan of the moment, to proceed in the most rational or most ordinary manner. If, however, there should prove anything farther in the matter than he could at present discover, Mowbray promised himself that the utmost circumspection on his part could not fail to discover it, and that in full time to prevent any ill consequences to his sister or himself.

Immersed in such cogitations, he avoided the inquisitive presence of Mr Micklewham, who, as usual, had been watching for him to learn how matters were going on ; and although it was now late, he mounted his horse, and rode hastily to Shaws-Castle. On the way, he deliberated with himself whether to mention to his sister the application which had been made to him, in order to prepare her to receive the young Earl as a suitor, favoured with her brother's approbation. "But no, no, no;" such was the result of his contemplation. "She might take it into her head that his thoughts were bent less upon having her for a countess, than on obtaining possession of his grand-uncle's estate.—We must keep quiet un-

til her personal appearance and accomplishments may appear at least to have some influence upon his choice.—We must say nothing till this blessed entertainment has been given and received."

## CHAPTER VI.

### A LETTER.

> "Has he so long held out with me untired,
> And stops he now for breath ?—Well—Be it so."
>
> *Richard III.*

MOWBRAY had no sooner left the Earl's apartment, than the latter commenced an epistle to a friend and associate, which we lay before the readers, as best calculated to illustrate the views and motives of the writer. It was addressed to Captain Jekyl, of the —— regiment of Guards, at the Green Dragon, Harrogate, and was of the following tenor.—

"DEAR HARRY,

"I have expected you here these ten days past, anxiously as ever man was looked for ; and have

now to charge your absence as high treason to your sworn allegiance. Surely you do not presume, like one of Napoleon's new-made monarchs, to grumble for independence, as if your greatness were of your own making, or as if I had picked you out of the whole St James's coffee-house to hold my back-hand for your sake, forsooth, not for my own? Wherefore, lay aside all your own proper business, be it the pursuit of dowagers, or the plucking of pigeons, and instantly repair to this place, where I may speedily want your assistance.—*May* want it, said I? Why, most negligent of friends and allies, I *have* wanted it already, and that when it might have done me yeoman's service. Know that I have had an affair since I came hither—have got hurt myself, and have nearly shot my friend; and if I had, I might have been hanged for it, for want of Harry Jekyl to bear witness in my favour. I was so far on my road to this place, when, not choosing, for certain reasons, to pass through the old village, I struck by a foot-path into the woods which separate it from the new Spaw, leaving my carriage and people to go the carriage-way. I had not

walked half a mile when I heard the footsteps of some one behind, and, looking round, what should I behold but the face in the world which I most cordially hate and abhor—I mean that which stands on the shoulders of my right trusty and well-beloved cousin and counsellor, Saint Francis. He seemed as much confounded as I was at our unexpected meeting; and it was a minute ere he found breath to demand what I did in Scotland, contrary to my promise, as he was pleased to express it.—I retaliated, and charged him with being here, in contradiction to his.—He justified, and said he had only come down upon the express information that I was upon my road to St Ronan's.—Now, Harry, how the devil should he have known this, hadst thou been quite faithful? for I am sure, to no ear but thine own did I breathe a whisper of my purpose.—Next, with the insolent assumption of superiority, which he founds on what he calls the rectitude of his purpose, he proposed we should both withdraw from a neighbourhood into which we could bring nothing but wretchedness.—I have told you how difficult it is to cope with the calm and resolute

manner that the devil gifts him with on such occasions; but I was determined he should not carry the day this time. I saw no chance for it, however, but to put myself into a towering passion, which, thank Heaven, I can always do on short notice.—I charged him with having imposed formerly on my youth, and made himself judge of my rights; and I accompanied my defiance with the strongest terms of irony and contempt, as well as with demand of instant satisfaction. I had my travelling pistols with me, (*et pour cause*,) and, to my surprise, my gentleman was equally provided.—For fair play's sake, I made him take one of my pistols—right Kuchenritters—a brace of balls in each, but that circumstance I forgot.—He would fain have argued the matter a little longer; but I thought at the time, and think still, that the best arguments which he and I can exchange, must come from the point of the sword, or the muzzle of the pistol.—We fired nearly together, and I think both dropped—I am sure I did, but recovered in a minute, with a damaged arm and a scratch on the temple—it was the last which stunned me—so much for double-

loaded pistols.—My friend was invisible, and I had nothing for it but to walk to the Spaw, bleeding all the way like a calf, and tell a raw-head-and-bloody-bone story about a footpad, which, but for my earldom, and my gory locks, no one would have believed.

"Shortly after, when I had been installed in a sick room, I had the mortification to learn, that my own impatience had brought all this mischief upon me, at a moment when I had every chance of getting rid of my friend without trouble, had I but let him go on his own errand; for it seems he had an appointment that morning with a booby Baronet, who is said to be a bullet-slitter, and would perhaps have rid me of Saint Francis without any trouble or risk on my part. Meantime, his non-appearance at this rendezvous has placed Master Francis Tyrrel, as he chooses to call himself, in the worst odour possible with the gentry at the Spring, who have denounced him as a coward and no gentleman.—What to think of the business myself, I know not; and I much want your assistance to see what can have become of this fellow, who, like a spectre of ill omen, has

so often thwarted and baffled my best plans. My own confinement renders me inactive, though my wound is fast healing. Dead he cannot be; for, had he been mortally wounded, we should have heard of him somewhere or other—he could not have vanished from the earth like a bubble of the elements. Well and sound he cannot be; for, besides that I am sure I saw him stagger and drop, firing his pistol as he fell, I know him well enough to swear, that, had he not been severely wounded, he would have first pestered me with his accursed presence and assistance, and then walked forward with his usual composure to settle matters with Sir Bingo Binks. No—no—Saint Francis is none of those who leave such jobs half finished—it is but doing him justice to say, he has the devil's courage to back his own deliberate impertinence. But then, if wounded severely, he must be still in this neighbourhood, and probably in concealment—this is what I must discover, and I want your assistance in my inquiries among the natives.—Haste hither, Harry, as ever you look for good at my hand.

"A good player, Harry, always studies to make the best of bad cards—and so I have en-

deavoured to turn my wound to some account; and it has given me the opportunity to secure Monsieur le Frere in my interests. You say very truly, that it is of consequence to me to know the character of this new actor on the disordered scene of my adventures.—Know, then, he is that most incongruous of all monsters—a Scotch buck—how far from being buck of the season you may easily judge. Every point of national character is opposed to the pretensions of this luckless race, when they attempt to take on them a personage which is assumed with so much facility by their brethren of the Isle of Saints. They are a shrewd people, indeed, but so destitute of ease, grace, and pliability of manners, and insinuation of address, that they eternally seem to suffer actual misery in their attempts to look gay and careless. Then their pride heads them back at one turn, their poverty at another, their pedantry at a third, their *mauvaise honte* at a fourth; and with so many obstacles to make them bolt off the course, it is positively impossible they should win the plate. No, Harry, it is the grave folks that have to fear a Caledonian invasion—they will make no

conquests in the world of fashion. Excellent bankers they may be, for they are eternally calculating how to add interest to principal;—good soldiers; for they are, if not such heroes as they would be thought, as brave, I suppose, as their neighbours, and much more amenable to discipline;—lawyers they are born; indeed every country gentleman is bred one, and their patient and crafty disposition enables them, in other lines, to submit to hardships which others could not bear, and avail themselves of advantages which others would let pass under their noses unavailingly. But assuredly Heaven did not form the Caledonian for the gay world; and his efforts at ease, grace, and gaiety, resemble only the clumsy gambols of the ass in the fable. Yet he has his sphere too, (in his own country only,) where the character which he assumes is allowed to pass current. This Mowbray, now—this brother-in-law of mine, might do pretty well at a Northern Meeting, or the Leith races, where he could give five minutes to the sport of the day, and the next half hour to country politics, or to farming; but it is scarce necessary to tell you, Harry,

that this will not pass on the better side of the Tweed.

"Yet, for all I have told you, this trout was not easily tickled; nor should I have made much of him, had he not, in the plenitude of his northern conceit, entertained that notion of my being a good subject of plunder, which you had contrived (blessing on your contriving brain) to insinuate into him by means of Wolverine. He commenced this hopeful experiment, and, as you must have anticipated, caught a Tartar with a vengeance. Of course, I used my victory only so far as to secure his interest in accomplishing my principal object; and yet, I could see my gentleman's pride was so much injured in the course of the negotiation, that not all the advantages which the match offered to his damned family, were able to subdue the chagrin arising from his defeat. He did gulp it down though, and we are friends and allies, for the present at least—not so cordially so, however, as to lead me to trust him with the whole of the strangely complicated tale. The circumstance of the will it was necessary to communicate, as affording a suffi-

ciently strong reason for urging my suit; and this partial disclosure enabled me for the present to dispense with farther confidence.

"You will observe, that I stand by no means secure; and besides the chance of my cousin's re-appearance—a certain event, unless he is worse than I dare hope for—I have perhaps to expect the fantastic repugnance of Clara herself, or some sulky freak on her brother's part.—In a word—and let it be such a one as conjurors raise the devil with—Harry Jekyl, I *want* you.

"As well knowing the nature of my friend, I can assure him that his own interest, as well as mine, may be advanced by his coming hither on duty. Here is a blockhead, whom I already mentioned, Sir Bingo Binks, with whom something may be done worth *your* while, though scarce worth *mine*. The Baronet is a perfect buzzard, and when I came here he was under Mowbray's training. But the awkward Scotchman had plucked half-a-dozen pen-feathers from his wing with so little precaution, that the Baronet had become frightened and shy, and is now in the act of rebelling against Mowbray, whom

he both hates and fears—the least backing from a knowing hand like you, and the bird becomes your own, feathers and all.—Moreover,

——— by my life,
This Bingo hath a mighty pretty wife.

A lovely woman, Harry—rather plump, and above the middle size—quite your taste—A Juno in beauty, looking with such scorn on her husband, whom she despises and hates, and looking, as if she *could* look so differently on any one whom she might like better, that, on my faith, 'twere sin not to give her occasion. If you please to venture your luck, either with the knight or the lady, you shall have fair play, and no interference—that is, provided you appear upon this summons; for, otherwise, I may be so placed, that the affairs of the knight and the lady may fall under my own immediate cognizance. And so, Harry, if you wish to profit by these hints, you had best make haste, as well for your own concerns, as to assist me in mine.—Your's, Harry, as you behave yourself,

"ETHERINGTON."

Having finished this eloquent and instructive epistle, the young Earl demanded the attendance of his own valet Solmes, whom he charged to put it into the post-office without delay, and with his own hand.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THEATRICALS.

——The play's the thing.
*Hamlet.*

THE important day had now arrived, the arrangement for which had for some time occupied all the conversation and thoughts of the good company at the Well of St Ronan's. To give it, at the same time, a degree of novelty and consequence, Lady Penelope Penfeather had long since suggested to Mr Mowbray, that the more gifted and accomplished part of the guests might contribute to furnish out entertainment for the rest, by acting a few scenes of some popular drama; an accomplishment in which her self-conceit assu-

red her that she was peculiarly qualified to excel. Mr Mowbray, who seemed on this occasion to have thrown the reins entirely into her ladyship's hands, made no objection to the plan which she proposed, excepting that the old-fashioned hedges and walks of the garden at Shaws-Castle must necessarily serve for stage and scenery, as there was no time to fit up the old hall for the exhibition of the proposed theatricals. But upon inquiry among the company, this plan was wrecked upon the ordinary shelve, to wit, the difficulty of finding performers who would consent to assume the lower characters of the drama. For the first parts there were candidates more than enough; but most of these were greatly too high-spirited to play the fool, excepting they were permitted to top the part. Then amongst the few unambitious underlings, who could be coaxed or cajoled to undertake subordinate characters, there were so many bad memories, and short memories, and treacherous memories, that at length the plan was resigned in despair.

A substitute, proposed by Lady Penelope, was next considered. It was proposed to act

what the Italians call a Comedy of Character; that is, not an exact drama, in which the actors deliver what is set down for them by the author; but one, in which the plot having been previously fixed upon, and a few striking scenes adjusted, the actors are expected to supply the dialogue extempore, or, as Petruchio says, from their mother wit. This is an amusement which affords much entertainment in Italy, particularly in the state of Venice, where the characters of their drama have been long since all previously fixed, and are handed down by tradition; and this species of drama, though rather belonging to the masque than the theatre, is distinguished by the name of Comedia del' Arte.* But the shame-faced character of Britons is still more alien to a species of display, where there is a constant and extemporaneous demand for

* See Mr William Stewart Rose's very interesting Letters from the North of Italy, Vol. I. Letter XXX., where this curious subject is treated with the information and precision which distinguish that accomplished author.

wit, or the sort of ready small talk which supplies its place, than to the regular exhibitions of the drama, where the author, standing responsible for language and sentiment, leaves to the personators of the scene only the trouble of finding enunciation and action.

But the ardent and active spirit of Lady Penelope, still athirst after novelty, though baffled in her two first projects, brought forward a third, in which she was more successful. This was the proposal to combine a certain number, at least, of the guests, properly dressed for the occasion, as representing some well-known historical or dramatic characters, in a group, having reference to history, or to a scene of the drama. In this representation, which may be called playing a picture, action, even pantomimical action, was not expected; and all that was required of the performers, was to throw themselves into such a group as might express a marked and striking point of an easily remembered scene, but when the actors are at a pause, and without either speech or motion. In this species of representa-

tion there was no tax, either on the invention or memory of those who might undertake parts; and what recommended it still farther to the good company, there was no marked difference betwixt the hero and heroine of the group, and the less distinguished characters by whom they were attended on the stage; and every one who had confidence in a handsome shape and a becoming dress, might hope, though standing in not quite so broad and favourable a light as the principal personages, to draw, nevertheless, a considerable portion of attention and applause. This motion, therefore, that the company, or such of them as might choose to appear properly dressed for the occasion, should form themselves into one or more groups, which might be renewed and varied as often as they pleased, was hailed and accepted as a bright idea, which assigned to every one a share of the importance attached to its probable success.

Mowbray, on his side, promised to contrive some arrangement which should separate the actors in this mute drama from the spectators,

and enable the former to vary the amusement, by withdrawing themselves from the scene, and again appearing upon it under a different and new combination. This plan of exhibition, where fine clothes and affected attitudes supplied all draughts upon fancy or talent, was highly agreeable to most of the ladies present; and even Lady Binks, whose discontent seemed proof against every effort that could be proposed to sooth it, acquiesced in the project, with perfect indifference indeed, but with something less of sullenness than usual.

It now only remained to rummage the circulating library, for some piece of sufficient celebrity to command attention, and which should be at the same time suited to the execution of their project. Bell's British Theatre, Miller's Modern and Ancient Drama, and about twenty odd volumes, in which stray tragedies and comedies were associated, like the passengers in a mail-coach, without the least attempt at selection or arrangement, were all examined in the course of their researches. But Lady Penelope declared

loftily and decidedly for Shakespeare, as the author whose immortal works were fresh in every one's recollection. Shakespeare was therefore chosen, and from his works the Midsummer Night's Dream was selected, as the play which afforded the greatest variety of characters, and most scope of course for the intended representation. An active competition presently occurred among the greater part of the company, for such copies of the Midsummer Night's Dream, or the volume of Shakespeare containing it, as could be got in the neighbourhood; for, notwithstanding Lady Penelope's declaration, that every one who could read had Shakespeare's plays by heart, it appeared that such of his dramas as have not kept possession of the stage, were very little known at St Ronan's, save among those people who are emphatically called readers.

The adjustment of the parts was the first subject of consideration, so soon as those who intended to assume characters had refreshed their recollection on the subject of the piece. Theseus was unanimously assigned to Mowbray, the giver of the entertainment, and therefore justly enti-

tled to represent the Duke of Athens. The costume of an Amazonian, crest and plume, a tucked-up vest, and a tight buskin of sky-blue silk, buckled with diamonds, reconciled Lady Binks to the part of Hippolyta. The superior stature of Miss Mowbray to Lady Penelope, made it necessary that the former should perform the part of Helena, and her ladyship rest contented with the shrewish character of Hermia. It was resolved to compliment the young Earl of Etherington with the part of Lysander, which, however, his lordship declined, and, preferring comedy to tragedy, refused to appear in any other character than that of the magnanimous Bottom; and he gave them such a humorous specimen of his quality in that part, that all were delighted at once with his condescension in assuming, and his skill in performing, the presenter of Pyramus.

The part of Egeus was voted to Captain MacTurk, whose obstinacy in refusing to appear in any other than the full Highland garb, had nearly disconcerted the whole affair. At length this obstacle was got over, on the authority of Childe

Harold, who remarks the similarity betwixt the Highland and Grecian costume; and the company, dispensing with the difference of colour, voted the Captain's variegated kilt of the Mac-Turk tartan to be the kirtle of a Grecian mountaineer,—Egeus to be a Mainot, and the Captain to be Egeus. Chatterley and the painter, walking gentlemen by profession, agreed to walk through the parts of Demetrius and Lysander, the two Athenian lovers; and Mr Winterblossom, after many excuses, was bribed by Lady Penelope with an antique, or supposed antique cameo, to play the part of Philostratus, master of the revels, providing his gout would permit him to remain so long upon the turf, which was to be their stage.

Muslin trowsers, adorned with spangles, a voluminous turban of silver gauze, and wings of the same, together with an embroidered slipper, converted at once Miss Digges into Oberon, the King of Shadows, whose sovereign gravity, however, was somewhat indifferently represented by the silly gaiety of Miss in her Teens, and the uncontrolled delight which she felt in her fine clothes.

A younger sister represented Titania; and two or three subordinate elves were selected, among families attending the salutiferous fountain, who were easily persuaded to let their children figure in fine clothes at so juvenile an age, though they shook their head at Miss Digges and her pantaloons, and no less at the liberal display of Lady Binks's right leg, with which the Amazonian garb gratified the public of St Ronan's.

Dr Quackleben was applied to to play Wall, by the assistance of such a wooden horse, or screen, as clothes are usually dried upon; the old Attorney stood for Lion; and the other characters of Bottom's drama were easily found among the unnamed frequenters of the Spring. Dressed rehearsals, and so forth, went merrily on—all voted there was a play filled.

But even the Doctor's eloquence could not press Mrs Blower into the scheme, although she was particularly wanted to represent Thisbe.

"Truth is," she replied, "I dinna greatly like stage-plays. John Blower, honest man, as sailors are aye for some spree or another, wad take me ance to see ane Mrs Siddons—I thought we

should hae been crushed to death before we gat in—a' my things riven aff my back, forbye the four lily-white shillings that it cost us—and than in cam three frightsome carlines wi' besoms, and they wad bewitch a sailor's wife—I was lang aneugh there—and out I wad be, and out John Blower gat me, but wi' nae sma' fight and fend. —My Lady Penelope Penfitter, and the great folk, may just take it as they like; but in my mind, Dr Cacklehen, it's a' mere blasphemy for folk to gar themselves look otherwise than their Maker made them."

"You mistake the matter entirely, my dear Mrs Blower," said the Doctor; "there is nothing serious intended—a mere *placebo*—just a divertisement to cheer the spirits, and assist the effect of the waters—cheerfulness is a great promoter of health."

"Dinna tell me o' health, Dr Kittlepin!—Can it be for the puir body M'Durk's health to gang about like a tobacconist's sign in a frosty morning, with his poor wizened houghs as blue as a blawart?—weel I wot he is a humbling spectacle. Or can it gie onybody health or pleasure either

to see your ainsell, Doctor, ganging about wi' a claise screen tied to your back, covered wi' paper, and painted like a stane and lime wa'?—I'll gang to see nane of their vanities, Dr Kittlehen; and if there is nae other decent body to take care o' me, as I dinna like to sit a haill afternoon by mysell, I'll e'en gae doun to Mr Sowerbrowst the maltster's—he is a pleasant, sensible man, and a sponsible man in the world."

"Confound Sowerbrowst," thought the Doctor; "if I had thought he was to come across me thus, he should not have got the better of his dispepsy so early.—My dear Mrs Blower," he continued, but aloud, "it is a foolish affair enough, I must confess; but every person of style and fashion at the Well has settled to attend this exhibition; there has been nothing else talked of for this month through the whole country, and it will be a year before it is forgotten. And I would have you consider how ill it will look, my dear Mrs Blower, to stay away—nobody will believe you had a card—no, not though you were to hang it round your neck like a label round a vial of tincture, Mrs Blower."

"If ye thought *that*, Doctor Kickherben," said the widow, alarmed at the idea of losing cast, "I wad e'en gang to the show, like other folk; sinful and shameful if it be, let them that make the sin bear the shame. But then I will put on nane of their Popish disguises—me that has lived in North Leith, baith wife and lass, for I shanna say how mony years, and has a character to keep up baith with saint and sinner.—And then, whase to take care of me, since you are gaun to make a lime-and-stane wa' of yoursell, Doctor Kickinben?"

"My dear Mrs Blower, if such is your determination, I will not make a wall of myself. Her ladyship must consider my profession—she must understand it is my function to look after my patients, in preference to all the stage-plays in this world—and to attend on a case like yours, Mrs Blower, it is my duty to sacrifice, were it called for, the whole drama, from Shakespeare to O'Keefe."

On hearing this magnanimous resolution, the widow's heart was greatly cheered; for, in fact, she might probably have considered the Doctor's

perseverance in the plan, of which she had expressed such high disapprobation, as little less than a symptom of absolute defection from his allegiance. By an accommodation, therefore, which suited both parties, it was settled that the Doctor should attend his loving widow to Shaws-Castle without mask or mantle; and that the painted screen should be transferred from Quackleben's back to the broad shoulders of a briefless barrister, well qualified for the part of Wall, since the composition of his skull might have rivalled in solidity the mortar and stone of the most approved builder.

We must not pause to dilate upon the various labours of body and spirit which preceded the intervening space, betwixt the settlement of this gay scheme, and the time appointed to carry it into execution. We will not attempt to describe how the wealthy, by letter and by commissioners, urged their researches through the stores of the Gallery of Fashion for specimens of oriental finery—how they that were scant of diamonds supplied their place with paste and Bristol stones—how the country dealers were driven out of pa-

tience by the demand for goods of which they had never before heard the name—and, lastly, how the busy fingers of the more economical damsels twisted handkerchiefs into turbans, and converted petticoats into pantaloons, shaped and sewed, cut and clipped, and spoiled many a decent gown and petticoat, to produce something like a Grecian habit.—Who can describe the wonders wrought by active needles and scissars, aided by thimbles and thread, upon silver gauze, and sprigged muslin? or who can shew how, if the fair nymphs of the Spring did not entirely succeed in attaining the desired resemblance to heathen Greeks, they at least contrived to get rid of all similitude to sober Christians?

Neither is it necessary to dwell upon the various schemes of conveyance which were resorted to, in order to transfer the beau monde of the Spaw to the scene of revelry at Shaws-Castle. These were various as the fortunes and pretensions of the owners; from the lordly curricle, with its outriders, to the humble taxed cart, nay, untaxed cart, which conveyed the personages of less rank. For the latter, indeed, the two post-chaises

at the Inn seemed converted into hourly stages, so often did they come and go between the Hotel and the Castle—a glad day for the postilions, and a day of martyrdom for the poor post-horses; so seldom is it that every department of any society, however constituted, can be injured or benefited by the same occurrence.

Such, indeed, was the penury of vehicular conveyance, that applications were made in manner most humble, even to Meg Dods herself, entreating she would permit her old whiskey to *ply* (for such might have been the phrase) at St Ronan's Well, for that day only, and that upon good cause shewn. But not for sordid lucre would the undaunted spirit of Meg compound her feud with her neighbours of the detested Well. "Her carriage," she briefly replied, "was engaged for her ain guest and the minister, and deil anither body's fit should gang intill't. Let every herring hing by its ain head." And, accordingly, at the duly appointed hour, creaked forth the leathern convenience, in which, carefully screened by the curtain from the gaze of the fry of the village, sat Nabob Touchwood, in the costume of an Indian

merchant, or Shroff, as they are termed. The clergyman would not, perhaps, have been so punctual, had not a set of notes and messages from his friend at the Cleikum, ever following each other as thick as the papers which decorate the tail of a school-boy's kite, kept him so continually on the alert from daybreak till noon, that Mr Touchwood found him completely dressed; and the whiskey was only delayed for about ten minutes before the door of the manse, a space employed by Mr Cargill in searching for the spectacles, which were actually at length discovered upon his own nose.

At length, seated by the side of his new friend, Mr Cargill arrived safe at Shaws-Castle, the gate of which mansion was surrounded by a screaming group of children, so extravagantly delighted at seeing the strange figures to whom each successive carriage gave birth, that even the stern brow and well-known voice of Johnnie Tirlsneck, the beadle, though stationed in the court on express purpose, was not equal to the task of controlling them. These noisy intruders, however, who, it was believed, were

somewhat favoured by Clara Mowbray, were excluded from the court which opened before the house, by a couple of grooms or helpers armed with their whips, and could only salute, with their shrill and wondering hailing, the various personages, as they passed down a short avenue leading from the exterior gate.

The Cleikum nabob and the minister were greeted with shouts not the least clamorous; which the former merited by the ease with which he wore the white turban, and the latter, by the infrequency of his appearance in public, and both, by the singular association of a decent clergyman of the church of Scotland, in a dress more old-fashioned than could now be produced in the General Assembly, walking arm in arm, and seemingly in the most familiar terms, with a Parsee merchant. They stopped a moment at the gate of the court-yard to admire the front of the old mansion, which had been disturbed with so unusual a scene of gaiety.

Shaws-Castle, though so named, presented no appearance of defence; and the present edifice had never been designed for more than the ac-

commodation of a peaceful family, having a low, heavy front, loaded with some of that meretricious ornament, which, uniting, or rather confounding, the Gothic and Grecian architecture, was much used during the reigns of James VI. of Scotland, and his unfortunate son. The court formed a small square, two sides of which were occupied by such buildings as were required for the family, and the third by the stables, the only part of the edifice which had received any repairs, the present Mr Mowbray having put them into excellent order. The fourth side of the square was shut up by a screen wall, through which a door opened to the avenue; the whole being a kind of structure which may be still found on those old Scottish properties, where a rage to render their place *Parkish*, as was at one time the prevailing phrase, has not induced the owners to pull down the venerable and sheltering appendages with which their wiser fathers had screened their mansion, and to lay the whole open to the keen north-east; much after the fashion of a spinster of fifty, who chills her-

self to gratify the public, by an exposure of her thin red elbows, and shrivelled neck and bosom.

A double door, thrown hospitably open on the present occasion, admitted the company into a dark and low hall, where Mowbray himself, wearing the under dress of Theseus, but not having yet assumed his ducal cap and robes, stood to receive his guests with due courtesy, and to indicate to each the road allotted to him. For those who were to take share in the representation of the morning, were conducted to an old saloon, destined for a green-room, and which communicated with a series of apartments on the right, hastily fitted with accommodations for arranging and completing their toilette; while others, who took no part in the intended drama, were ushered to the left, into a large, unfurnished, and long disused dining parlour, where a sashed door opened into the gardens, crossed with yew and holly hedges, still trimmed and clipped by the old grey-headed gardener, upon those principles which a Dutchman thought worthy of commemorating in a didactic poem upon the *Ars Topiaria.*

A little wilderness, surrounding a beautiful piece of the smoothest turf, and itself bounded by such high hedges as we have described, had been selected as the stage most proper for the exhibition of the intended dramatic picture. It afforded many facilities; for a rising bank exactly in front was accommodated with seats for the spectators, who had a complete view of the sylvan theatre, the bushes and shrubs having been cleared away in front, and the place supplied with a temporary screen, which, being withdrawn by the domestics appointed for that purpose, was to serve for the rising of the curtain. A covered trellice, which passed through another part of the garden, and terminated with a private door opening from the right wing of the building, seemed as if it had been planted on purpose for the proposed exhibition, as it served to give the personages of the drama a convenient and secret access from their green-room to the place of representation. Indeed, the dramatis personæ, at least those who adopted the management of the matter, were induced, by so much convenience, to extend, in some measure, their

original plan; and, instead of one group, as had been at first proposed, they now found themselves able to exhibit to the good company a succession of three or four, selected and arranged from different parts of the drama; thus giving some duration, as well as some variety, to the entertainment, besides the advantage of separating and contrasting the tragic and the comic scenes.

After wandering about amongst the gardens, which contained little to interest any one, and endeavouring to recognize some characters, who, accommodating themselves to the humours of the day, had ventured to appear in the various disguises of ballad-singers, pedlars, shepherds, Highlanders, and so forth, the company began to draw together towards the spot where the seats prepared for them, and the screen drawn in front of the bosky stage, induced them to assemble, and excited expectation, especially as a scroll in front of the esplanade set forth, in the words of the play, "This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn brake our tyring house, and we will do it in action." A delay of about ten minutes be-

gan to excite some suppressed murmurs of impatience among the audience, when the touch of Gow's fiddle suddenly burst from a neighbouring hedge, behind which he had established his little orchestra. All were of course silent,

As through his dear strathspeys he bore with Highland rage.

And when he changed his strain to an adagio, and suffered his music to die away in the plaintive notes of Roslin Castle, the echoes of the old walls were, after long slumber, awakened by that enthusiastic burst of applause, with which the Scotch usually receive and reward their country's gifted minstrel.

"He is his father's own son," said Touchwood to the clergyman, for both had gotten seats near about the centre of the place of audience. "It is many a long year since I listened to old Neil at Inver, and, to say truth, spent a night with him over pancakes and Athole brose; and I never expected to hear his match in my lifetime. But stop—the curtain rises."

It did indeed arise, and displayed Hermia,

Helena, and their lovers, in attitudes corresponding to the scene of confusion occasioned by the error of Puck.

Messrs Chatterley and the Painter played their parts neither better nor worse than amateur actors in general; and the best that could be said of them was, that they seemed more than half ashamed of their exotic dresses, and of the public gaze.

But against this untimely weakness Lady Penelope was guarded, by the strong shield of self-conceit. She minced, ambled, and, notwithstanding the slight appearance of her person, and the depredations which time had made on a countenance which had never been very much distinguished for beauty, seemed desirous to top the part of the beautiful daughter of Egeus. The sullenness which was proper to the character of Hermia, was much augmented by the discovery that Miss Mowbray was so much better dressed than herself,—a discovery which she had but recently made, as that young lady had not attended upon the regular rehearsals at the Well, save once, and then without her stage habit. Her ladyship,

however, did not permit this painful sense of inferiority, where she had expected triumph, so far to prevail over her desire of shining, as to interrupt materially the manner in which she had settled to represent her portion of the scene. The nature of the exhibition precluded much action, but Lady Penelope made amends by such a succession of grimaces, as might rival, in variety at least, the singular display which Garrick used to call "going his rounds." She twisted her poor features into looks of most desperate love towards Lysander; into those of wonder and offended pride, when she turned them upon Demetrius; and finally settled them on Helena, with the happiest possible imitation of an incensed rival, who feels the impossibility of relieving her swollen heart by tears alone, and is just about to have recourse to her nails.

No contrast could be stronger in looks, demeanour, and figure, than that between Hermia and Helena. In the latter character, the beautiful form and foreign dress of Miss Mowbray attracted all eyes. She kept her place on the stage, as a sentinel does that which his charge

assigns him; for she had previously told her brother, that though she consented, at his importunity, to make part of the exhibition, it was as a piece of the scene, not as an actor, and accordingly a painted figure could scarce be more immovable. The expression of her countenance seemed to be that of deep sorrow and perplexity, belonging to her part, over which wandered at times an air of irony or ridicule, as if she were secretly scorning the whole exhibition, and even herself, for condescending to become part of it. Above all, a sense of bashfulness had cast upon her cheek a colour, which, though sufficiently slight, was more than her countenance was used to display; and when the spectators beheld, in the splendour and grace of a rich oriental dress, her whom they had hitherto been only accustomed to see attired in the most careless manner, they felt the additional charms of surprise and contrast; so that the bursts of applause which were vollied towards the stage, might be said to be addressed to her alone, and to vie in sincerity with those which have been forced from an audience by the most accomplished performer.

"Oh, that puir Lady Penelope!" said honest Mrs Blower, who, when her scruples against the exhibition were once got over, began to look upon it with particular interest,—"I am really sorry for her puir face, for she gars it work like the sails of John Blower's vesshel in a stiff breeze.—Oh, Doctor Cacklehen, dinna ye think she would need, if it were possible, to rin ower her face wi' a gusing iron, just to take the wrunkles out o't?"

"Hush, hush! my good dear Mrs Blower," said the Doctor; "Lady Penelope is a woman of quality, and my patient, and such people always act charmingly—you must understand there is no hissing at a private theatre—Hem!"

"You may say what you like, Doctor, but there is nae fule like an auld fule—To be sure, if she was as young and beautiful as Miss Mowbray—hegh me, and I didna use to think her sae bonnie neither—but dress—dress makes an unco difference—That shawl o' hers—I daur say the like o't was ne'er seen in braid Scotland—it will be real Indian, I'se warrant."

"Real Indian!" said Mr Touchwood, in an

accent of disdain, which rather disturbed Mrs Blower's equanimity,—" why, what do you suppose it should be, madam ?"

" I dinna ken, sir," said she, edging somewhat near the Doctor, not being altogether pleased, as she afterwards allowed, with the outlandish appearance and sharp tone of the traveller; then pulling her own drapery round her shoulders, she added, courageously, " there are braw shawls made at Paisley, that ye will scarce ken frae foreign."

" Not know Paisley shawls from Indian, madam," said Touchwood; " why, a blind man could tell by the slightest touch of his little finger. Yon shawl, now, is the handsomest I have seen in Britain—and at this distance I can tell it to be a real *Tozie.*"

" Cozie may she weel be that wears it," said Mrs Blower. " I declare, now I look on't again, it's a perfect beauty."

" It is called Tozie, ma'am, not cozie," continued the traveller; " the Shroffs at Surat told me in 1801, that it is made out of the inner coat of a goat."

"Of a sheep, sir, I am thinking ye mean, for goats has nae woo'."

"Not much of it, indeed, madam; but you are to understand they use only the inmost coat; and then their dyes—that Tozie now will keep its colour while there is a rag of it left—men bequeath them in legacies to their grandchildren."

"And a very bonnie colour it is," said the dame; "something like a mouse's back, only a thought redder—I wonder what they ca' that colour."

"The colour is much admired, madam," said Touchwood, who was now on a favourite topic; "the Mussulmans say the colour is betwixt that of an elephant and the breast of the *faughta*."

"In troth, I am as wise as I was," said Mrs Blower.

"The *faughta*, madam, so called by the Moors, for the Hindhus call it *hollah*, is a sort of pigeon, held sacred among the Moslem of India, because they think it dyed its breast in the blood of Ali.—But I see they are closing the

scene.—Mr Cargill, are you composing your sermon, my good friend, or what can you be thinking of?"

Mr Cargill had, during the whole scene, remained with his eyes fixed, in intent and anxious, although almost unconscious gaze, upon Clara Mowbray; and when the voice of his companion startled him out of his reverie, he exclaimed, "Most lovely—most unhappy—yes—I must and will see her."

"See her?" replied Touchwood, too much accustomed to his friend's singularities to look for much reason or connection in anything he said or did; "Why, you shall see her and talk to her too, if that will give you pleasure.—They say now," he continued, lowering his voice to a whisper, "that this Mowbray is ruined.—I see nothing like it, since he can dress out his sister like a Begum. Did you ever see such a splendid shawl?"

"Dearly purchased splendour," said Mr Cargill, with a deep sigh; "I wish that the price be yet fully paid."

"Very likely not," said the traveller; "very likely it's gone to the book; and for the price, I have known a thousand rupees given for such a shawl in the country.—But hush, hush, we are to have another tune from Nathaniel—faith, and they are withdrawing the screen—Well, they have some mercy—they do not let us wait long between the acts of their follies at least—I love a quick and rattling fire in these vanities—Folly walking a funereal pace, and clinking her bells to the time of a passing knell, makes sad work indeed."

A strain of music, beginning slowly, and terminating in a light and wild allegro, introduced on the stage those delightful creatures of the richest imagination that ever teemed with wonders, the Oberon and Titania of Shakespeare. The pigmy majesty of the captain of the fairy band had no unapt representative in Miss Digges, whose modesty was not so great an intruder as to prevent her desire to present him in all his dignity, and she moved, conscious of the graceful turn of a pretty ankle, which, encircled with a string of pearls, and clothed in flesh-co-

loured silk, of the most cobweb texture, rose above the crimson sandal. Her jewelled tiara, too, gave dignity to the frown with which the offended King of Shadows greeted his consort, as each entered upon the scene at the head of their several attendants.

The restlessness of the children had been duly considered; and, therefore, their part of the exhibition had been contrived to represent dumb show, rather than a stationary picture. The little Queen of Elves was not inferior in action to her moody lord, and repaid, with a look of female impatience and scorn, the haughty air which seemed to express his sullen greeting,

"Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania."

The other children were, as usual, some clever and forward, some loutish and awkward enough; but the gambols of childhood are sure to receive applause, paid, perhaps, with a mixture of pity and envy, by those in advanced life; and besides, there were in the company several fond papas and mammas, whose clamorous approbation, though given apparently to the whole perform-

ers, was especially dedicated in their hearts to their own little Jackies and Marias,—for *Mary*, though the prettiest and most classical of Scottish names, is now unknown in the land. The elves, therefore, played their frolics, danced a measure, and vanished with good approbation.

The anti-mask, as it may be called, of Bottom, and his company of actors, next appeared on the stage, and a thunder of applause received the young Earl, who had, with infinite taste and dexterity, transformed himself into the similitude of an Athenian clown; observing the Grecian costume, yet so judiciously discriminated from the dress of the higher characters, as at once to fix the character of a thick-skinned mechanic on the wearer. Touchwood, in particular, was loud in his approbation, from which the correctness of the costume must be inferred; for that honest gentleman, like many other critics, was indeed not very much distinguished for good taste, but had a capital memory for petty matters of fact; and while the most impressive look or gesture of an actor might have failed to interest him, would

have censured most severely the fashion of a sleeve, or the colour of a shoe-tie.

But the Earl of Etherington's merits were not confined to his external appearance; for, had his better fortunes failed him, his deserts, like those of Hamlet, might have got him a fellowship in a cry of players. He presented, though in dumb show, the pragmatic conceit of Bottom, to the infinite amusement of all present, especially of those who were well acquainted with the original; and when he was "translated" by Puck, he bore the ass's head, his newly-acquired dignity, with an appearance of conscious greatness, which made the metamorphosis, though in itself sufficiently farcical, irresistibly comic. He afterwards displayed the same humour in his frolics with the fairies, and the intercourse which he held with Messrs Cobweb, Mustard-seed, Pease-blossom, and the rest of Titania's cavaliers, who lost all command of their countenances, at the gravity with which he invited them to afford him the luxury of scratching his hairy snout.

The entertainment closed with a grand parade of all the characters which had appeared, during which Mowbray concluded that the young lord himself, unremarked, might have time enough to examine the outward form, at least, of his sister Clara, whom, in the pride of his heart, he could not help considering superior in beauty, dressed as she now was, with every advantage of art, even to the brilliant Amazon, Lady Binks. It is true, Mowbray was not a man to give preference to the intellectual expression of poor Clara's features over the sultana-like beauty of the haughty dame, which promised to an admirer all the vicissitudes which can be expressed by a countenance lovely in every change, and changing as often as an ardent and impetuous disposition, unused to constraint, and despising admonition, should please to dictate. Yet, to do him justice, though his preference was perhaps dictated more by fraternal partiality than by purity of taste, he certainly, on the present occasion, felt the full extent of Clara's superiority; and there was a proud smile on his lip, as, at the conclusion of the divertisement, he asked the Earl how he had

been pleased. The rest of the performers had separated, and the young lord remained on the stage, employed in disembarrassing himself of his awkward vizor, when Mowbray put this question, to which, though general in terms, he naturally gave a particular meaning.

"I could wear my ass's head for ever," he said, "on condition my eyes were to be so delightfully employed as they have been during the last scene.—Mowbray, your sister is an angel!"

"Have a care that that head-piece of yours has not perverted your taste, my lord," said Mowbray. "But why did you wear that disguise on your last appearance? you should, I think, have been uncovered."

"I am ashamed to answer you," said the Earl; "but truth is, first impressions are of consequence, and I thought I might do as wisely not to appear before your sister, for the first time, in the character of Bully Bottom."

"Then you change your dress, my lord, for dinner, if we call our luncheon by that name?" said Mowbray.

"I am going to my room this instant for that very purpose," replied the Earl.

"And I," said Mowbray, "must step in front, and dismiss the audience; for I see they are sitting gaping there waiting for another scene."

They parted upon this; and Mowbray, as Duke Theseus, stepped before the screen, and announcing the conclusion of the dramatic pictures which they had had the honour to present before the worshipful company, thanked the spectators for the very favourable reception which they had afforded; and intimated to them, that if they could amuse themselves by strolling for an hour among the gardens, a bell would summon to the house at the expiry of that time, when some refreshments would wait their acceptance. This annunciation was received with the applause due to the *Amphitryon ou l'on dine;* and the guests, arising from before the temporary theatre, dispersed through the gardens, which were of some extent, to seek for or create amusement to themselves. The music

greatly aided them in this last purpose, and it was not long ere a dozen of couples and upwards, were "tripping it on the light fantastic toe," (I love a phrase that is not hackneyed) to the tune of Monymusk.

Others strolled through the grounds, meeting some fantastic disguise at the end of every verdant alley, and communicating to others the surprise and amusement which they themselves were receiving. The scene, from the variety of dresses, the freedom which it gave to the display of humour amongst such as possessed any, and the general disposition to give and receive pleasure, rendered the little masquerade more entertaining than scenes of the kind for which more ample and magnificent preparations have been made. There was also a singular and pleasing contrast between the fantastic figures who wandered through the gardens, and the quiet scene itself, to which the old clipt hedges, the formal distribution of the ground, and the antiquated appearance of one or two fountains and artificial cascades, in which the naiads had been for the

nonce compelled to resume their ancient frolics, gave an appearance of unusual simplicity and seclusion, and which seemed rather to belong to the last than to the present generation.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### PERPLEXITIES.

For revels, dances, masques, and merry hours,
Fore-run fair Love, strewing his way with flowers.
*Love's Labour's Lost.*

Worthies away—the scene begins to cloud.
*Ibidem.*

Mr Touchwood and his inseparable friend, Mr Cargill, wandered on amidst the gay groups we have described, the former censuring with great scorn the frequent attempts which he observed towards an imitation of the costume of the East, and appealing with self-complacence to his own superior representation, as he greeted, in Moorish and in Persic, the several turban'd figures who passed his way; while the clergyman, whose mind seemed to labour with some weighty and

important project, looked in every direction for the fair representative of Helena, but in vain. At length he caught a glimpse of the memorable shawl, which had drawn forth so learned a discussion from his companion; and, starting from Touchwood's side with a degree of anxious alertness totally foreign to his usual habits, he endeavoured to join the person by whom it was worn.

"By the Lord," said his companion, "the Doctor is beside himself!—the parson is mad!—the divine is out of his senses, that is clear; and how the devil can he, who scarce can find his road from the Cleikum to his own manse, venture himself unprotected into such a scene of confusion?—he might as well pretend to cross the Atlantic without a pilot—I must push off in chase of him, lest worse come of it."

But the traveller was prevented from executing his friendly purpose by a sort of crowd which came rushing down the alley, the centre of which was occupied by Captain MacTurk, in the very act of bullying two pseudo Highlanders, for having presumed to lay aside their breeches before they had acquired the Gaelic language. The sounds of con-

tempt and insult with which the genuine Celt was overwhelming the unfortunate impostors, were not, indeed, intelligible otherwise than from the tone and manner of the speaker; but these intimated so much displeasure, that the plaided forms whose unadvised choice of a disguise had provoked it—two raw lads from a certain great manufacturing town—heartily repented their temerity, and were in the act of seeking for the speediest exit from the gardens; rather choosing to resign their share of the dinner, than to abide the farther consequences that might follow from the displeasure of this Highland Termagaunt.

Touchwood had scarcely extricated himself from this impediment, and again commenced his researches after the clergyman, when his course was once more interrupted by a sort of press-gang, headed by Sir Bingo Binks, who, in order to play his character of a drunken boatswain to the life, seemed certainly drunk enough, however little of a seaman. His cheer sounded more like a view-hollo than a hail, when, with a volley of such oaths as would have blown a whole fleet of the Bethel union out of the wa-

ter, he ordered Touchwood "to come under his lee, and be d—d; for smash his old timbers, he must go to sea again, for as weather-beaten a hulk as he was."

Touchwood answered instantly, "To sea with all my heart, but not with a land-lubber for commander.—Harkye, brother, do you know how much of a horse's furniture belongs to a ship?"

"Come, none of your quizzing, my old buck," said Sir Bingo—"What the devil has a ship to do with horse's furniture?—Do you think we belong to the horse-marines—ha! ha! I think you're matched, brother."

"Why, you son of a fresh-water gudgeon, that never in your life sailed farther than the Isle of Dogs, do you pretend to play a sailor, and not know the bridle of the bowline, and the saddle of the boltsprit, and the bitt for the cable, and the girth to hoist the rigging, and the whip to serve for small tackle?—There is a trick for you to find out an Abram-man, and save sixpence when he begs of you as a disbanded seaman.—Get along with you! or the constable shall be charged with the whole press-gang to man the work-house."

A general laugh arose at the detection of the swaggering boatswain; and all that the Baronet had for it was to sneak off, saying, "D—n the old quiz, who the devil thought to have heard so much slang from an old muslin night-cap!"

Touchwood being now an object of some attention, was followed by two or three stragglers, whom he endeavoured to rid himself of the best way he could, testifying an impatience a little inconsistent with the decorum of his oriental demeanour, but which arose from his desire to rejoin his companion, and some apprehension of inconvenience which he apprehended Cargill might sustain during his absence. For, being in fact as good-natured a man as any in the world, Mr Touchwood was at the same time one of the most conceited, and was very apt to suppose, that his presence, advice, and assistance, were of the most indispensable consequence to those with whom he lived; and that not only on great emergencies, but even in the most ordinary occurrences of life.

Meantime, Mr Cargill, whom he sought in vain, was, on his part, anxiously keeping in sight of the beautiful Indian shawl, which served as a

flag to announce to him the vessel which he held in chase. At length he approached so close as to say, in an anxious whisper, "Miss Mowbray —Miss Mowbray—I must speak with you."

"And what would you have with Miss Mowbray?" said the fair wearer of the beautiful shawl, but without turning round her head.

"I have a secret—an important secret, of which to make you aware; but it is not for this place.—Do not turn from me!—Your happiness in this, and perhaps in the next life, depends on your listening to me."

The lady led the way, as if to give him an opportunity of speaking with her more privately, to one of those old-fashioned and deeply embowered recesses, which are commonly found in such gardens as that of Shaws-Castle; and, with her shawl wrapped around her head, so as in some degree to conceal her features, she stood before Mr Cargill in the doubtful light and shadow of a huge platanus tree, which formed the canopy of the arbour, and seemed to await the communication he had promised.

"Report says," said the clergyman, speaking in an eager and hurried manner, yet with a low

voice, and like one desirous of being heard by her whom he addressed, and by no one else,—"Report says that you are about to be married."

"And is report kind enough to say to whom?" answered the lady, with a tone of indifference which seemed to astound her interrogator.

"Young lady," answered he, with a solemn voice, "had this levity been sworn to me, I could never have believed it! Have you forgot the circumstances in which you stand?—Have you forgotten that my promise of secrecy, sinful perhaps even in that degree, was but a conditional promise?—or did you think that a being so sequestered as I am was already dead to the world, even while he was crawling upon its surface?—Know, young lady, that I am indeed dead to the pleasures and the ordinary business of life, but am even therefore the more alive to its duties."

"Upon my honour, sir, unless you are pleased to be more explicit, it is impossible for me either to answer or understand you," said the lady; "you speak too seriously for a masquerade pleasantry, and yet not clearly enough to make your earnest comprehensible."

"Is this sullenness, Miss Mowbray?" said the clergyman, with increased animation; "Is it levity?—Or is it alienation of mind?—Even after a fever of the brain, we retain a recollection of the causes of our illness.—Come, you must and do understand me, when I say that I will not consent to your committing a great crime to attain temporal wealth and rank, no, not to make you an empress.—My path is a clear one; and should I hear a whisper breathed of your alliance with this Earl, or whatever he may be, rely upon it, that I will withdraw the veil, and make your brother, your bridegroom, and the whole world acquainted with the situation in which you stand, and the impossibility of your forming the alliance which you propose to yourself, I am compelled to say, against the laws of God and man."

"But, sir—sir," answered the lady, rather eagerly than anxiously, "you have not yet told me what business you have with my marriage, or what arguments you can bring against it."

"Madam," replied Mr Cargill, "in your present state of mind, and in such a scene as this, I cannot enter upon a topic for which the season is unfit, and you, I am sorry to say, are totally

unprepared. It is enough that you know the grounds on which you stand. At a fitter opportunity, I will, as it is my duty, lay before you the enormity of what you are said to have meditated, with the freedom which becomes one, who, however humble, is appointed to explain to his fellow-creatures the laws of his Maker.—In the meantime, I am not afraid that you will take any hasty step after such a warning as this."

So saying, he turned from the lady with that dignity which a conscious discharge of duty confers, yet, at the same time, with a sense of deep pain, inflicted by the careless levity of her whom he addressed. She did not any longer attempt to detain him, but made her escape from the arbour by one alley, as she heard voices which seemed to approach it from another. The clergyman, who took the opposite direction, met in full encounter a whispering and tittering pair, who seemed, at his sudden appearance, to check their tone of familiarity, and assume an appearance of greater distance towards each other. The lady was no other than the fair Queen of the Amazons, who seemed to have adopted the recent partiality of Titania towards Bully Bot-

tom, being in conference such and so close as we have described with the late representative of the Athenian weaver, whose recent visit to his chamber had metamorphosed him into the more gallant disguise of an ancient Spanish cavalier. He now appeared with cloak and drooping plume, sword, poniard, and guitar, richly dressed at all points, as for a serenade beneath his mistress's window; a silk masque at the breast of his embroidered doublet hung ready to be assumed in case of intrusion, as an appropriate part of the national dress.

It sometimes happened to Mr Cargill, as we believe it may chance to other men much subject to absence of mind, that, contrary to their wont, and much after the manner of a sunbeam suddenly piercing a deep mist, and illuminating one particular object in the landscape, some sudden recollection rushes upon them, and seems to compel them to act under it, as under the influence of complete certainty and conviction. Mr Cargill had no sooner set eyes on the Spanish cavalier, in whom he neither knew the Earl of Etherington, nor recognized Bully Bottom, than with

hasty emotion he seized on his reluctant hand, and exclaimed, with a mixture of eagerness and solemnity, "I rejoice to see you!—Heaven has sent you here in its own good time."

"I thank you, sir," replied Lord Etherington, very coldly, "I believe you have the joy of the meeting entirely on your side, as I cannot remember having seen you before."

"Is not your name Bulmer?" said the clergyman. "I—I know—I am sometimes apt to make mistakes.—But I am sure your name is Bulmer."

"Not that ever I or my godfathers heard of—my name was Bottom half an hour ago—perhaps that makes the confusion," answered the Earl, with very cold and distant politeness;—"Permit me to pass, sir, and attend the lady."

"Quite unnecessary," answered Lady Binks; "I leave you to adjust your mutual recollections with your new old friend, my lord—he seems to have something to say." So saying, the lady walked on, not perhaps sorry of an opportunity to shew apparent indifference for his Lordship's society in the presence of one who

had surprised them in what might seem a moment of exuberant intimacy.

"You detain me, sir," said the Earl of Etherington to Mr Cargill, who, bewildered and uncertain, still kept himself placed so directly before the young nobleman as to make it impossible for him to pass, without absolutely pushing him to one side. "I must really attend the lady," he added, making another effort to walk on.

"Young man," said Mr Cargill, "you cannot disguise yourself from me. I am sure—my mind assures me, that you are that very Bulmer whom Heaven hath sent here to prevent crime."

"And you," said Lord Etherington, "whom my mind assures me I never saw in my life, are sent hither by the devil, I think, to create confusion."

"I beg pardon, sir," said the clergyman, staggered by the calm and pertinacious denial of the Earl—"I beg pardon if I am in a mistake—that is, if I am *really* in a mistake—but I am not—I am sure I am not!—That look—that smile—I am NOT mistaken. You *are* Valentine Bulmer—the

very Valentine Bulmer whom I—but I will not make your private affairs any part of this exposition—enough, you *are* Valentine Bulmer."

"Valentine?—Valentine?—I am neither Valentine nor Orson—I wish you good morning, sir."

"Stay, sir, stay, I charge you," said the clergyman; "if you are unwilling to be known yourself, it may be because you have forgotten who I am—Let me name myself as the Rev. Josiah Cargill, Minister of St Ronan's."

"If you bear a character so venerable, sir,—in which, however, I am not in the least interested,—I think when you make your morning draught a little too potent, it might be as well for you to stay at home and sleep it off, before coming into company."

"In the name of Heaven, young gentleman, lay aside this untimely and unseemly jesting! and tell me if you be not, as I cannot but still believe you, that same youth, who, seven years since, left in my deposit a solemn secret, which, if I should unfold to the wrong person, woe would be my own heart, and evil the consequences which might ensue."

"You are very pressing with me, sir," said the Earl; "and, in exchange, I will be equally frank with you.—I am not the man whom you mistake me for, and you may go seek him where you will—It will be still more lucky for you if you chance to find your own wits in the course of your researches; for I must tell you plainly, I think they are gone somewhat astray." So saying, with a gesture expressive of a determined purpose to pass on, Mr Cargill had no alternative but to make way, and suffer him to proceed.

The worthy clergyman stood as if rooted to the ground, and, with his usual habit of thinking aloud, exclaimed to himself, "My fancy has played me many a bewildering trick, but this is the most extraordinary of them all!—What can this young man think of me? It must have been my conversation with that unhappy young lady, that has made such impression upon me as to deceive my very eye-sight, and causes me to connect with her history the face of the next person that I met—What *must* the stranger think of me?"

"Why, what every one thinks of thee that

knows thee, prophet," said the friendly voice of Touchwood, accompanying his speech with an awakening slap on the clergyman's shoulder; "and that is, that thou art an unfortunate philosopher of Laputa, who has lost his flapper in the throng.—Come along—having me once more by your side you need fear nothing.—Why, now I look at you closer, you look as if you had seen a basilisk—not that there is any such thing, otherwise I must have seen it myself, in the course of my travels—but you seem pale and frightened—What the devil is the matter?"

"Nothing," answered the clergyman, "except that I have even this very moment made an egregious fool of myself."

"Pooh, pooh, that is nothing to sigh over, prophet.—Every man does so at least twice in the four-and-twenty hours," said Touchwood.

"But I had nearly betrayed to a stranger a secret deeply concerning the honour of a noble family."

"That was wrong, Doctor," said Touchwood; "take care of that in future; and, indeed, I would advise you not to speak even to

your beadle, Willie Watson, until you have assured yourself, by at least three pertinent questions and answers, that you have the said Willie corporally and substantially in presence before you, and that your fancy has not invested some stranger with honest Willie's singed periwig and threadbare brown joseph.—Come along—come along."

So saying, he hurried forward the perplexed clergyman, who in vain made all excuses he could think of in order to effect his escape from the scene of gaiety, in which he was so unexpectedly involved. He pleaded head-ache; and his friend assured him that a mouthful of food, and a glass of wine, would mend it. He stated he had business; and Touchwood replied that he could have none but composing his next sermon, and reminded him that it was two days till Sunday. At length, Mr Cargill confessed that he had some reluctance again to see the stranger, on whom he had endeavoured with such pertinacity to fix an acquaintance, which he was now well assured existed only in his own imagination.

The traveller treated his scruples with scorn, and said that guests meeting in this general manner, had no more to do with each other than if they were assembled in a caravansary.

"So that you need not say a word to him in the way of apology or otherwise—or, what will be still better, I, who have seen so much of the world, will make the pretty speech for you." As they spoke, he dragged the divine towards the house, where they were now summoned by the appointed signal, and where the company were assembling in the old saloon already noticed, previous to passing into the dining-room, where the refreshments were prepared. "Now, Doctor," continued the busy friend of Mr Cargill, "let us see which of all these people has been the subject of your blunder. Is it yon animal of a Highlandman?—or the impertinent brute that wants to be thought a boatswain?—or which of them all is it?—Ay, here they come, two and two, Newgate fashion—the young Lord of the Manor with old Lady Penelope—does he set up for Ulysses, I wonder?—The Earl of Ethering-

ton with Lady Bingo—methinks it should have been with Miss Mowbray."

"The Earl of what did you say?" quoth the clergyman, anxiously. "How is it you titled that young man in the Spanish dress?"

"Oho!" said the traveller; "what, I have discovered the goblin that has scared you?—Come along—come along—I will make you acquainted with him." So saying, he dragged him towards Lord Etherington; and before the divine could make his negative intelligible, the ceremony of introduction had taken place. "My Lord Etherington, allow me to present Mr Cargill, minister of this parish—a learned gentleman, whose head is often in the Holy Land, when his person seems present among his friends. He suffers extremely, my lord, under the sense of mistaking your lordship for the Lord knows who; but when you are acquainted with him, you will find that he can make a hundred stranger mistakes than that, so we hope that your lordship will take no prejudice or offence."

"There can be no offence taken where no offence is intended," said Lord Etherington, with

much urbanity. "It is I who ought to beg the reverend gentleman's pardon, for hurrying from him without allowing him to make a complete eclaircissement. I beg his pardon for an abruptness which the place and the time—for I was immediately engaged in a lady's service—rendered unavoidable."

Mr Cargill gazed on the young nobleman as he pronounced these words, with the easy indifference of one who apologizes to an inferior in order to maintain his own character for politeness, but with perfect indifference whether his excuses are or are not held satisfactory. And as the clergyman gazed, the belief which had so strongly clung to him that the Earl of Etherington and young Valentine Bulmer were the same individual person, melted away like frost-work before the morning sun, and that so completely, that he marvelled at himself for having ever entertained it. Some strong resemblance of features there must have been to have led him into such a delusion; but the person, the tone, the manner of expression, were absolutely different; and his attention being now especially directed to-

wards these particulars, Mr Cargill was inclined to think the two personages almost totally dissimilar.

The clergyman had now only to make his apology, and fall back from the head of the table to some lower seat, which his modesty would have preferred, when he was suddenly seized upon by the Lady Penelope Penfeather, who, detaining him in the most elegant and persuasive manner possible, insisted that they should be introduced to each other by Mr Mowbray, and that Mr Cargill should sit beside her at table.—She had heard so much of his learning—so much of his excellent character—desired so much to make his acquaintance, that she could not think of losing an opportunity, which Mr Cargill's learned seclusion rendered so very rare—in a word, catching the Black Lion was the order of the day; and her ladyship, having trapped her prey, soon sat triumphant with him by her side.

A second separation was thus effected betwixt Touchwood and his friend; for the former, not being included in the invitation, or, indeed, at all noticed by Lady Penelope, was obliged to find

room at a lower part of the table, where he excited much surprise by the dexterity with which he dispatched boiled rice with chop-sticks.

Mr Cargill being thus exposed, without a consort, to the fire of Lady Penelope, speedily found it so brisk and incessant, as to drive his complaisance, little tried as it had been for many years by small talk, almost to extremity. She began by begging him to draw his chair close, for an instinctive terror of fine ladies had made him keep his distance. At the same time, she hoped "he was not afraid of her as an Episcopalian; her father had belonged to that communion; for," she added, with what was intended for an arch smile, "we were somewhat naughty in the forty-five, as you may have heard; —but all that was over, and she was sure Mr Cargill was too liberal to entertain any dislike or shyness on that score.—She could assure him she was far from disliking the Presbyterian form—indeed she had often wished to hear it, where she was sure to be both delighted and edified (here a gracious smile) in the church of St Ronan's—and hoped to do so whenever Mr Mowbray had got

a stove, which he had ordered from Edinburgh, on purpose to air his pew for her accommodation."

All this, which was spoken with wreathed smiles and nods, and so much civility as to remind the clergyman of a cup of tea over-sweetened to conceal its want of strength and flavour, required and received no farther answer than an accommodating look and an acquiescent bow.

"Ah, Mr Cargill," continued the inexhaustible Lady Penelope, "your profession has so many demands on the heart as well as the understanding—is so much connected with the kindnesses and charities of our nature—with our best and purest feelings, Mr Cargill. You know what Goldsmith says,

> "—— to his duty prompt at every call,
> He watch'd, and wept, and felt, and pray'd for all."

And then Dryden has such a picture of a parish priest, so inimitable, one would think, did we not hear now and then of some living mortal presuming to emulate its features, (here another insinuating nod and expressive smile.)

Refined himself to soul to curb the sense,
And almost made a sin of abstinence,
Yet had his aspect nothing of severe,
But such a face as promised him sincere;
Nothing reserved or sullen was to see,
But sweet regard and pleasing sanctity."

While her ladyship declaimed, the clergyman's wandering eye confessed his absent mind; his thoughts travelling perhaps to accomplish a truce betwixt Saladin and Conrade of Mountserrat, unless they chanced to be occupied with some occurrences of that very day, so that the lady was obliged to recal her indocile auditor with the leading question, "You are well acquainted with Dryden, of course, Mr Cargill?"

"I have not the honour, madam," said Mr Cargill, starting from his reverie, and but half understanding the question he replied to.

"Sir!" said the lady, in surprise.

"Madam!—my lady!" answered Mr Cargill, in embarrassment.

"I asked you if you admired Dryden;—but you learned men are so absent—perhaps you thought I said Leyden."

"A lamp too early quenched, madam," said Mr Cargill; "I knew him well."

"And so did I," eagerly replied the lady of the cerulean buskin; "he spoke ten languages —how mortifying to poor me, Mr Cargill, who could only boast of five?—but I have studied a little since that time—I must have you to help me in my studies, Mr Cargill—it will be charitable—but perhaps you are afraid of a female pupil?"

A thrill, arising from former recollections, passed through poor Cargill's mind, with as much acuteness as the pass of a rapier might have done through his body; and we cannot help remarking, that a forward prater in society, like a busy bustler in a crowd, besides all other general points of annoyance, is eternally rubbing upon some tender point, and galling men's feelings, without knowing or regarding it.

"You must assist me, besides, in my little charities, Mr Cargill, now that you and I are become so well acquainted.—There is that Anne Heggie—I sent her a trifle yesterday, but I am told—I should not mention it, but only one

would not have the little they have to bestow lavished on an improper object—I am told she is not quite proper—an unwedded mother, in short, Mr Cargill—and it would be especially unbecoming in me to encourage profligacy."

"I believe, madam," said the clergyman, gravely, "the poor woman's distress may justify your ladyship's bounty, even if her conduct has been faulty."

"O, I am no prude neither, I assure you, Mr Cargill," answered the Lady Penelope. "I never withdraw my countenance from any one but on the most irrefragable grounds. I could tell you of an intimate friend of my own, whom I have supported against the whole clamour of the people at the Well, because I believe, from the bottom of my soul, she is only thoughtless—nothing in the world but thoughtless—O, Mr Cargill, how can you look across the table so intelligently?—who would have thought it of you?—Oh fie, to make such personal applications!"

"Upon my word, madam, I am quite at a loss to comprehend——"

"Oh fie, fie, Mr Cargill," throwing in as

much censure and surprise as a confidential whisper can convey—" you looked at my Lady Binks—I know what you think, but you are quite wrong, I assure you; you are entirely wrong.—I wish she would not flirt quite so much with that young man though, Mr Cargill—her situation is particular.—Indeed, I believe she wears out his patience; for see—he is leaving the room before we sit down—how singular!—And then, do you not think it very odd, too, that Miss Mowbray has not come down to us?"

" Miss Mowbray!—what of Miss Mowbray—is she not here?" said Mr Cargill, starting, and with an expression of interest which he had not yet bestowed on any of her ladyship's liberal communications.

" Ay, poor Miss Mowbray," said Lady Penelope, lowering her voice, and shaking her head; " she has not appeared—her brother went up stairs a few minutes since, I believe, to bring her down, and so we are all left here to look at each other.—How very awkward!—but you know Clara Mowbray."

" I, madam?" said Mr Cargill, who was now

sufficiently attentive; "I really—I know Miss Mowbray—that is, I knew her some years since—but your ladyship knows she has been long in bad health—uncertain health at least, and I have seen nothing of the young lady for a very long time."

"I know it, my dear Mr Cargill—I know it," continued the Lady Penelope, in the same tone of deep sympathy; "I know, and most unhappy surely have been the circumstances that have separated her from your advice and friendly counsel.—All this I am aware of—and to say truth, it has been chiefly on poor Clara's account that I have been giving you the trouble of fixing an acquaintance upon you.—You and I together, Mr Cargill, might do wonders to cure her unhappy state of mind—I am sure we might—that is, if you could bring your mind to repose absolute confidence in me."

"Has Miss Mowbray desired your ladyship to converse with me upon any subject which interests her?" said the clergyman, with more cautious shrewdness than Lady Penelope had suspected him of possessing. "I will in that case

be happy to hear the nature of her communication; and whatever my poor services can perform, your ladyship may command them."

"I—I—I cannot just assert," said her ladyship with hesitation, "that I have Miss Mowbray's direct instructions to speak to you, Mr Cargill, upon the present subject. But my affection for the dear girl is so very great—and then, you know, the inconveniences which may arise from this match."

"From which match, Lady Penelope?" said Mr Cargill.

"Nay, now, Mr Cargill, you really carry the privilege of Scotland too far—I have not put a single question to you, but you have answered it by another—let us converse intelligibly for five minutes, if you can but condescend so far."

"For any length of time which your ladyship may please to command," said Mr Cargill; "providing the subject regard your ladyship's own affairs or mine, could I suppose these last for a moment likely to interest you."

"Out upon you," said the lady, laughing affectedly; "you should really have been a Ca-

tholic priest instead of a Presbyterian. What an invaluable father confessor have the fair sex lost in you, Mr Cargill, and how dexterously you would have evaded any cross-examinations which might have committed your penitents !"

"Your ladyship's raillery is far too severe for me to withstand or reply to," said Mr Cargill, bowing with more ease than her ladyship expected; and, retiring gently backwards, he extricated himself from a conversation which he began to find somewhat embarrassing.

At that moment a murmur of surprise took place in the apartment, which was just entered by Miss Mowbray, leaning on her brother's arm. The cause of this murmur will be best understood, by narrating what had passed betwixt the brother and sister.

## CHAPTER IX.

### EXPOSTULATION.

Seek not the feast in these irreverent robes;
Go to my chamber—put on clothes of mine.
*The Taming of the Shrew.*

It was with a mixture of anxiety, vexation, and resentment, that Mowbray, just when he had handed Lady Penelope into the apartment where the tables were covered, observed that his sister was absent, and that Lady Binks was hanging on the arm of Lord Etherington, to whose rank it would properly have fallen to escort the lady of the house. An anxious and hasty glance cast through the room, ascertained that she was absent, nor could the ladies present

give any account of her after she had quitted the gardens, excepting that Lady Penelope had spoken a few words with her in her own apartment, immediately after the scenic entertainment was concluded.

Thither Mowbray hurried, complaining aloud of his sister's laziness in dressing, but internally hoping that the delay was occasioned by nothing of a more important character.

He hastened up stairs, entered her little sitting-room without ceremony, and knocking at the door of her dressing-room, begged her to make haste.

"Here is the whole company impatient," he said, assuming a tone of pleasantry; "and Sir Bingo Binks exclaiming for your presence, that he may be let loose on the cold meat."

"Paddock calls," said Clara from within; "anon—anon!"

"Nay, it is no jest, Clara," continued her brother; "for Lady Penelope is miauling like a starved cat!"

"I come—I come, grimalkin," answered Cla-

ra, in the same vein as before, and entered the parlour as she spoke, her finery entirely thrown aside, and dressed in the riding habit which was her usual and favourite attire.

Her brother was both surprised and offended. "On my soul," he said, "Clara, this is behaving very ill. I indulge you in every freak upon ordinary occasions, but you might surely on this day, of all others, have condescended to appear something like my sister, and a gentlewoman receiving company in her own house."

"Why, dearest John," said Clara, "so that the guests have enough to eat and drink, I cannot conceive why I should concern myself about their finery, or they trouble themselves about my plain clothes."

"Come, come, Clara, this will not do," answered Mowbray; "you must positively go back into your dressing-room, and huddle your things on as fast as you can. You cannot go down to the company dressed as you are."

"I certainly can, and I certainly will, John

—I have made a fool of myself once this morning to oblige you, and for the rest of the day I am determined to appear in my own dress; that is, in one which shews I neither belong to the world, nor wish to have anything to do with its fashions."

"By my soul, Clara, I will make you repent this!" said Mowbray, with more violence than he usually exhibited where his sister was concerned.

"You cannot, dear John," she coolly replied, "unless by beating me; and that I think you would repent of yourself."

"I do not know but what it were the best way of managing you," said Mowbray, muttering between his teeth; but commanding his violence, he only said aloud, "I am sure, from long experience, Clara, that your obstinacy will at the long run beat my anger. Do let us compound the point for once—keep your old habit, since you are so fond of making a sight of yourself, and only throw the shawl round your shoulders—it has been exceedingly admired, and

every woman in the house longs to see it closer —they can hardly believe it genuine."

"Do be a man, Mowbray," answered his sister; "meddle with your horse-sheets, and leave shawls alone."

"Do you be a woman, Clara, and think a little on them, when custom and decency render it necessary.—Nay, is it possible!—Will you not stir—not oblige me in such a trifle as this?"

"I would indeed if I could," said Clara; "but, since you must know the truth—do not be angry—I have not the shawl. I have given it away—given it up, perhaps I should say, to the rightful owner.—She has promised me something or other in exchange for it, however."

"Yes," answered Mowbray, "some of the work of her own fair hands, I suppose, or a couple of her drawings, made up into fire-screens.—On my word—on my soul, this is too bad!—It is using me too ill, Clara—far too ill. If the thing had been of no value, my giving it to you should have fixed some upon it.—Good even to you; we will do as well as we can without you."

"Nay, but, my dear John—stay but a moment," said Clara, taking his arm as he sullenly turned towards the door; "there are but two of us on the earth—do not let us quarrel about a trumpery shawl."

"Trumpery!" said Mowbray; "It cost fifty guineas, by G——, which I can but ill spare—trumpery!"

"O, never think of the cost," said Clara; "it was your gift, and that should, I own, have been enough to have made me keep to my death's day the poorest rag of it. But really Lady Penelope looked so very miserable, and twisted her poor face into so many odd expressions of anger and chagrin, that I resigned it to her, and agreed to say she had lent it to me for the performance. I believe she was afraid that I would change my mind, or that you would resume it as a seignorial waif; for, after she had walked a few turns with it wrapped around her, merely by way of taking possession, she dispatched it by a special messenger to her apartment at the Wells."

"She may go to the devil," said Mowbray, "for a greedy unconscionable jade, who has var-

nished over a selfish, spiteful heart, that is as hard as a flint, with a fine glosing of taste and sensibility !"

"Nay, but, John," replied his sister, "she really had something to complain of in the present case. The shawl had been bespoken on her account, or very nearly so—she shewed me the tradesman's letter—only some agent of yours had come in between with the ready money, which no tradesman can resist.—Ah, John! I suspect half of your anger is owing to the failure of a plan to mortify poor Lady Pen, and that she has more to complain of than you have.—Come, come, you have had the advantage of her in the first display of this fatal piece of finery, if wearing it on my poor shoulders can be called a display—e'en make her welcome to the rest for peace's sake, and let us go down to these good folks, and you shall see how pretty and civil I shall behave."

Mowbray, a spoiled child, and with all the petted habits of indulgence, was exceedingly fretted at the issue of the scheme which he had formed for mortifying Lady Penelope; but he

saw at once the necessity of saying nothing more to his sister on the subject. Vengeance he privately muttered against Lady Pen, whom he termed an absolute harpy in blue stockings; unjustly forgetting, that, in the very important affair in question, he himself had been the first to interfere with and defeat her ladyship's designs on the garment in question.

"But I will blow her," he said, "I will blow her ladyship's conduct in the business! She shall not outwit a poor whimsical girl like Clara, without hearing it on more sides than one."

With this Christian and gentleman-like feeling towards Lady Penelope, he escorted his sister into the eating-room, and led her to her proper place at the head of the table. It was the negligence displayed in her dress, which occasioned the murmur of surprise that greeted Clara on her entrance. Mowbray, as he placed his sister in her chair, made her general apology for her late appearance, and her riding-habit. "Some fairies," he supposed, "Puck, or such like tricksy goblin, had been in her wardrobe, and carried off whatever was fit for wearing."

There were answers from every quarter—that it would have been too much to expect Miss Mowbray to dress for their amusement a second time—that nothing she chose to wear could misbecome Miss Mowbray—that she had set like the sun, in her splendid scenic dress, and now rose like the full moon in her ordinary attire, (this flight was by the Reverend Mr Chatterley)—and that "Miss Mowbray being at hame, had an unco gude right to please hersell;" which last piece of politeness, being at least as much to the purpose as any that had preceded it, was the contribution of honest Mrs Blower; and was replied to by Miss Mowbray with a particular and most gracious bow.

Mrs Blower ought to have rested her colloquial fame, as Dr Johnson would have said, upon a compliment so evidently acceptable, but no one knows where to stop. She thrust her broad, good-natured, delighted countenance forward, and sending her voice from the bottom to the top of the table, like her umquhile husband when calling to his mate during a breeze, wondered

" why Miss Clara Moubrie didna wear that grand shawl she had on at the play-making, and her just sitting upon the wind of a door. Nae doubt it was for fear of the soup, and the butter-boats, and the like;—but *she* had three shawls, which she really fand was twa ower mony—if Miss Moubrie wad like to wear ane o' them—it was but imitashon to be sure—but it wad keep her shouthers as warm as if it were real Indian, and if it were dirtied it was the less matter."

" Much obliged, Mrs Blower," said Mowbray, unable to resist the temptation which this speech offered; " but my sister is not yet of quality sufficient, to entitle her to rob her friends of their shawls."

Lady Penelope coloured to the eyes, and bitter was the retort that arose to her tongue; but she suppressed it, and nodding to Miss Mowbray in the most friendly way in the world, yet with a very particular expression, she only said, " So, you have told your brother of the little transaction which we have had this morning?—*Tu me lo pagherai*—I give you fair warning, take care

none of your secrets come into my keeping—that's all."

Upon what mere trifles do the important events of human life sometimes depend! If Lady Penelope had given way to her first movement of resentment, the probable issue would have been some such half-comic, half-serious skirmish, as her ladyship and Mr Mowbray had often entertained the company withal. But revenge, which is suppressed and deferred, is always most to be dreaded; and to the effects of the deliberate resentment which Lady Penelope entertained upon this trifling occasion, must be traced the events which our history has to record. Secretly did she determine to return the shawl, which she had entertained hopes of making her own upon very reasonable terms; and as secretly did she determine to be revenged both upon brother and sister, conceiving herself already possessed, to a certain degree, of a clew to some part of their family history, which might serve for a foundation on which to raise her projected battery. The ancient offences and emulation of importance of the Laird of St Ronan's, and the superiority

which had been given to Clara in the exhibition of the day, combined with the immediate cause of resentment; and it only remained for her to consider how her revenge could be most signally accomplished.

Whilst such thoughts were passing through Lady Penelope's mind, Mowbray was searching with his eyes for the Earl of Etherington, judging that it might be proper, in the course of the entertainment, or before the guests had separated, to make him formally acquainted with his sister, as a preface to the more intimate connection which must, in prosecution of the plan agreed upon, take place betwixt them. Greatly to his surprise, the young Earl was nowhere visible, and the place which he had occupied by the side of Lady Binks had been seized upon by Winterblossom, as the best and softest chair in the room, and nearest to the head of the table, where the choicest of the entertainment is usually arranged. This honest gentleman, after a few insipid compliments to her ladyship upon her performance as Queen of the Amazons, had betaken himself to the much more interesting occupation of ogling the

dishes, through the glass which hung suspended at his neck, by a gold chain of Maltese workmanship. After looking and wondering for a few seconds, Mowbray addressed himself to the old beau-garçon, and asked him what had become of Etherington.

"Retreated," said Winterblossom, "and left but his compliments to you behind him—a complaint, I think, in his wounded arm.—Upon my word, that soup has a most appetizing flavour!—Lady Penelope, shall I have the honour to help you?—no!—nor you, Lady Binks?—you are too cruel!—I must comfort myself, like a heathen priest of old, by eating the sacrifice which the deities have scorned to accept of."

Here he helped himself to the plate of soup which he had in vain offered to the ladies, and transferred the further duty of dispensing it to Mr Chatterley; "It is your profession, sir, to propiate the divinities—ahem!"

"I did not think Lord Etherington would have left us so soon," said Mowbray; "but we must do the best we can without his countenance."

So saying, he assumed his place at the bottom of the table, and did his best to support the character of a hospitable and joyous landlord, while on her part, with much natural grace, and delicacy of attention calculated to set everybody at their ease, his sister presided at the upper end of the board. But the vanishing of Lord Etherington in a manner so sudden and unaccountable —the obvious ill-humour of Lady Penelope—and the steady, though passive, sullenness of Lady Binks, spread among the company a gloom like that produced by an autumnal mist upon a pleasing landscape.—The women were low-spirited, dull, nay, peevish, they did not well know why; and the men could not be joyous, though the ready resource of old hock and champagne made some of them talkative.—Lady Penelope broke up the party by well-feigned apprehension of the difficulties, nay, dangers, of returning by so rough a road.—Lady Binks begged a seat with her ladyship, as Sir Bingo, she said, judging from his devotion to the green flask, was likely to need their carriage home. From the moment of their departure, it became bad ton to remain be-

hind; and all, as in a retreating army, were eager to be foremost, excepting MacTurk and a few staunch topers, who, unused to meet with such good cheer every day of their lives, prudently determined to make the most of the opportunity.

We will not dwell on the difficulties attending the transportation of a large company by few carriages, though the delay and disputes thereby occasioned were of course more intolerable than in the morning, for the parties had no longer the hopes of a happy day before them, as a bribe to submit to temporary inconvenience. The impatience of many was so great, that, though the evening was raw, they chose to go on foot rather than await the dull routine of the returning carriages; and as they retired, they agreed, with one consent, to throw the blame of whatever inconvenience they might sustain on their host and hostess, who had invited so large a party before getting a shorter and better road made between the Well and Shaws-Castle.

"It would have been so easy to repair the path by the Buckstane!"

And this was all the thanks which Mr Mow-

bray received for an entertainment which had cost him so much trouble and expense, and had been looked forward to by the good society at the Well with such impatient expectation.

"It was an unca pleasant show," said the good-natured Mrs Blower, "only it was a pity it was sae tediousome; and there was surely an awfu' waste of gauze and muslin."

But so well had Dr Quackleben improved his numerous opportunities, that the good lady was much reconciled to affairs in general, by the prospect of coughs, rheumatisms, and other maladies acquired upon the occasion, which were likely to afford that learned gentleman, in whose prosperity she much interested herself, a very profitable harvest.

Mowbray, somewhat addicted to the service of Bacchus, did not find himself freed by the secession of so large a proportion of the company from the service of the jolly god, although, upon the present occasion, he could well have dispensed with his orgies. Neither the song, nor the pun, nor the jest, had any power to kindle his heavy spirit, mortified as he was by the event

of his party being so different from the brilliant consummation which he had anticipated. The guests, staunch boon companions, suffered not, however, their party to flag for want of the landlord's participation, but continued to drink bottle after bottle, with as little regard for Mr Mowbray's grave looks, as if they had been carousing at the Mowbray Arms, instead of the Mowbray mansion-house. Midnight at length released him, when, with an unsteady step, he sought his own apartment; cursing himself and his companions, consigning his own person with all dispatch to his bed, and bequeathing those of the company to as many mosses and quagmires, as could be found betwixt Shaws-Castle and St Ronan's Well.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE PROPOSAL.

Oh! you would be a vestal maid, I warrant,
The bride of Heaven—Come—we may shake your purpose;
For here I bring in hand a jolly suitor
Hath ta'en degrees in the seven sciences
That ladies love best—He is young and noble,
Handsome and valiant, gay, and rich, and liberal.

*The Nun.*

THE morning after a debauch is usually one of reflection, even to the most customary boon companion; and, in the retrospect of the preceding day, the young Laird of St Ronan's saw nothing very consolatory, unless that the excess was not, in the present case, of his own seeking, but had arisen out of the necessary duties of a landlord, or what were considered as such by his companions.

But it was not so much his dizzy recollections of the late carouse which haunted him on awa-

kening, as the inexplicability which seemed to shroud the purposes and conduct of his new ally, the Earl of Etherington.

That young nobleman had seen Miss Mowbray, had declared his high satisfaction, had warmly and voluntarily renewed the proposal which he had made ere she was yet known to him—and yet, far from seeking an opportunity to be introduced to her, he had even left the party abruptly, in order to avoid the necessary intercourse which must there have taken place between them. His lordship's flirtation with Lady Binks had not escaped the attention of the sagacious Mowbray—her ladyship also had been in a hurry to leave Shaws-Castle; and Mowbray promised to himself to discover the nature of this connection through Mrs Gingham, her ladyship's attendant, or otherwise; vowing deeply at the same time, that no peer in the realm should make an affectation of addressing Miss Mowbray a cloak for another and more secret intrigue. But his doubts on this subject were in great measure removed by the arrival of one of Lord Etherington's grooms with the following letter.

"My dear Mowbray,

"You would naturally be surprised at my escape from the table yesterday before you returned to it, or your lovely sister had graced it with her presence. I must confess my folly; and I may do so the more boldly, for, as the footing on which I first opened this treaty was not a very romantic one, you will scarce suspect me of wishing to render it such. But I did in reality feel, during the whole of yesterday, a reluctance which I cannot express, to be presented to the lady on whose favour the happiness of my future life is to depend, upon such a public occasion, and in the presence of so promiscuous a company. I had my mask, indeed, to wear while in the promenade, but, of course, that was to be laid aside at table, and, consequently, I must have gone through the ceremony of introduction; a most interesting moment, which I was desirous to defer till a fitter season. I hope you will permit me to call upon you at Shaws-Castle this morning, in the hope—the anxious hope—of being allowed to pay my duty to Miss Mowbray, and apologize for not waiting upon her

yesterday. I expect your answer with the utmost impatience, being always yours, &c. &c. &c.

"ETHERINGTON."

"This," said St Ronan's to himself, as he folded up the letter deliberately, after having twice read it over, "seems all fair and above board, I could not wish anything more explicit; and, moreover, it puts into black and white, as old Mick would say, what only rested before on our private conversation. An especial cure for the headach, such a billet as this in a morning."

So saying, he sat him down and wrote an answer, expressing the pleasure he would have in seeing his lordship so soon as he thought proper. He watched even the departure of the groom, and beheld him gallop off, as one who knows that his speedy return was expected by an impatient master.

Mowbray remained for a few minutes by himself, and reflected with delight upon the probable consequences of this match;—the advancement of his sister—and, above all, the various advantages which must necessarily accrue to him-

self by so close an alliance with one whom he had good reason to think deep *in the secret*, and capable of rendering him the most material assistance in his speculations on the turf, and in the sporting world. He then sent a servant to let Miss Mowbray know that he intended to breakfast with her.

"I suppose, John," said Clara, as her brother entered the apartment, "you are glad of a weaker cup this morning than those you were drinking last night—you were carousing till after the first cock."

"Yes," said Mowbray, "that sand-bed, old MacTurk, upon whom whole hogsheads make no impression, did make a bad boy of me—but the day is over, and they will scarce catch me in such another scrape.—What did you think of the masques?"

"Supported as well," said Clara, "as such folks support the disguise of gentlemen and ladies during life; and that is, with a great deal of bustle and very little propriety."

"I saw only one good masque there, and that was a Spaniard," said her brother.

"O, I saw him too," answered Clara; "but he wore his vizor on. An old Indian merchant, or some such thing, seemed to me a better character—the Spaniard did nothing but stalk about and twangle his guitar, for the amusement of my Lady Binks, as I think."

"He is a very clever fellow, though, that same Spaniard," rejoined Mowbray—"Can you guess who he is?"

"No, indeed; nor shall I take the trouble of trying. To set to guessing about it, were as bad as seeing the whole mummery over again."

"Well," replied her brother, "you will allow one thing at least—Bottom was well acted—you cannot deny that."

"Yes," replied Clara, "that worthy really deserved to wear his ass's head to the end of the chapter—but what of him?"

"Only conceive that he should be the very same person with that handsome Spaniard," replied Mowbray.

"Then there is one fool fewer than I thought there was," replied Clara, with the greatest indifference.

Her brother bit his lip.

"Clara," he said, "I believe you are an excellent good girl, and clever to boot, but pray do not set up for wit and oddity; there is nothing in life so intolerable as pretending to think differently from other people.—That gentleman was the Earl of Etherington."

This annunciation, though made in what was meant to be an imposing tone, had no impression on Clara.

"I hope he plays the peer better than the Fidalgo," she replied, carelessly.

"Yes," answered Mowbray, "he is one of the handsomest men of the time, and decidedly fashionable—you will like him much when you see him in private."

"It is of little consequence whether I do or no," answered Clara.

"You mistake the matter," said Mowbray, gravely; "it may be of considerable consequence."

"Indeed?" said Clara, with a smile; "I must suppose myself, then, too important a person not to make my approbation necessary to one of your

first-rates. He cannot pretend to pass muster at St Ronan's without it.—Well, I will depute my authority to Lady Binks, and she shall pass your new recruits instead of me."

"This is all nonsense, Clara," said Mowbray. "Lord Etherington calls here this very morning, and wishes to be made known to you. I expect you will receive him as a particular friend of mine."

"With all my heart—so you will engage, after this visit, to keep him down with your other particular friends at the Well—you know it is a bargain that you bring neither buck nor pointer into my parlour—the one worries my cat, and the other my temper."

"You mistake me entirely, Clara—this is a very different visitor from any I have ever introduced to you—I expect to see him often here, and I hope you and he will be better friends than you think of. I have more reasons for wishing this, than I have now time to tell you."

Clara remained silent for an instant, then looked at her brother with an anxious and scrutini-

zing glance, as if she wished to penetrate into his inmost purpose.

"If I thought—" she said, after a minute's consideration, and with an altered and disturbed tone; "but no—I will not think that Heaven intends me such a blow—least of all, that it should come from your hands." She walked hastily to the window, and threw it open—then shut it again, and returned to her seat, saying, with a constrained smile, "May Heaven forgive you, brother, but you frightened me heartily."

"I did not mean to do so, Clara," said Mowbray, who saw the necessity of soothing her; "I only alluded in joke to those chances that are never out of other girls' heads, though you never seem to calculate on them."

"I wish you, my dear John," said Clara, struggling to regain entire composure, "I wish *you* would profit by my example, and give up the science of chance also—it will not avail you."

"How d'ye know that?—I'll shew you the contrary, you silly wench," answered Mowbray —"Here is a banker's bill, payable to your own

order, for the cash you lent me, and something over—don't let old Mick have the fingering, but let Bindloose manage it for you—he is the honester man between two d—d knaves."

"Will not you, brother, send it to the man Bindloose yourself?"

"No—no," replied Mowbray—"he might confuse it with some of my transactions, and so you forfeit your stake."

"Well, I am glad you are able to pay me, for I want to buy Campbell's new work."

"I wish you joy of your purchase—but don't scratch me for not caring about it—I know as little of books as you of the long odds.—And come now, be serious, and tell me if you will be a good girl—lay aside your whims, and receive this English young nobleman like a lady as you are."

"That were easy," said Clara—"but—but—Pray, ask no more of me than just to see him.—Say to him at once, I am a poor creature in body, in mind, in spirits, in temper, in understanding—above all, say that I can receive him only once."

"I shall say no such thing," said Mowbray,

bluntly; "it is good to be plain with you at once—I thought of putting off this discussion—but since it must come, the sooner it is over the better.—You are to understand, Clara Mowbray, that Lord Etherington has a particular view in this visit, and that his view has my full sanction and approbation."

"I thought so," said Clara, in the same altered tone of voice in which she had before spoken; "my mind foreboded this last of misfortunes!—but, Mowbray, you have no child before you—I neither will nor can see this nobleman."

"How!" exclaimed Mowbray, fiercely; "do you dare return me so peremptory an answer?—Think better of it, for, if we differ, you will have the worst of the game."

"Rely upon it," she continued, with more vehemence, "I will see him nor no man upon the footing you mention—my resolution is taken, and threats and entreaties will prove equally unavailing."

"Upon my word, madam," said Mowbray, "you have, for a modest and retired young lady, plucked up a goodly spirit of your own!—

But you shall find mine equals it. If you do not agree to see my friend Lord Etherington, ay, and to receive him with the politeness due to the consideration I entertain for him, by Heaven! Clara, I will no longer regard you as my father's daughter. Think what you are giving up—the affection and protection of a brother—and for what? —merely for an idle point of etiquette.—You cannot, I suppose, even in the workings of your romantic brain, imagine that the days of Clarissa Harlowe and Harriet Byron are come back again, when women were married by main force; and it is monstrous vanity in you to suppose that Lord Etherington, since he has honoured you with any thoughts at all, will not be satisfied with a proper and civil refusal—You are no such prize, methinks, that the days of romance are to come back for you."

"I care not what days they are," said Clara—"I tell you I will not see Lord Etherington, or any one else, upon such preliminaries as you have stated—I cannot—I will not—and I ought not. —Had you meant me to receive him, which can be a matter of no consequence whatever, you

should have left him on the footing of an ordinary visitor—as it is, I will not see him."

"You *shall* see and hear him both," said Mowbray; "you shall find me as obstinate as you are—as willing to forget I am a brother, as you to forget that you have one."

"It is time then," replied Clara, "that this house, once our father's, should no longer hold us both. I can provide for myself, and may God bless you!"

"You take it coolly, madam," said her brother, stepping through the apartment with much anxiety both of look and gesture.

"I do," she answered; "for it is what I have often foreseen—Yes, brother, I have often foreseen that you would make your sister the subject of your plots and schemes, so soon as other stakes failed you. That hour is come, and I am, as you see, prepared to meet it."

"And where may you propose to retire to?" said Mowbray. "I think that I, your only relation and natural guardian, have a right to know that—my honour and that of my family is concerned."

"Your honour!" she retorted, with a keen glance at him; "your interest I suppose you mean, is somehow connected with the place of my abode.—But keep yourself patient—the den of the rock, the linn of the brook, should be my choice, rather than a palace without my freedom."

"You are mistaken, however," said Mowbray, sternly, "if you hope to enjoy more freedom than I think you capable of making a good use of. The law authorizes, and reason, and even affection, require that you should be put under restraint for your own safety, and that of your character. You roamed the woods a little too much in my father's time, if all stories be true."

"I did—I did indeed, Mowbray," said Clara, weeping; "God pity me, and forgive you for upbraiding me with my state of mind—I know I cannot sometimes trust my own judgment; but is it for you to remind me of this?"

Mowbray was at once softened and embarrassed.

"What folly is this?" he said; "you say the

most cutting things to me—are ready to fly from my house—and when I am provoked to make an angry answer, you burst into tears."

"Say you did not mean what you said, my dearest brother!" exclaimed Clara; "O say you did not mean it!—Do not take my liberty from me—it is all I have left, and, God knows, it is a poor comfort in the sorrows I undergo. I will put a fair face on everything—will go down to the Well—will wear what you please, and say what you please—but O! leave me the liberty of my solitude here—let me weep alone in the house of my father—and do not force a broken-hearted sister to lay her death at your door—My span must be a brief one, but do not you shake the sand-glass!—Disturb me not—let me pass quietly—I do not ask this so much for my sake as for your own. I would have you think of me sometimes, Mowbray, after I am gone, and without the bitter reflections which the recollection of harsh usage will assuredly bring with it. Pity me, were it but for your own sake—I have deserved nothing but compassion at

your hand—There are but two of us on earth, why should we make each other miserable?"

She accompanied these entreaties with a flood of tears, and the most heart-bursting sobs. Mowbray knew not what to determine. On the one hand, he was bound by promise to the Earl; on the other, his sister was in no condition to receive such a visitor; nay, it was most probable, that if he adopted the strong measure of compelling her to receive him, her behaviour would probably be such as totally to break off the projected match, on the success of which he had founded so many castles in the air. In this dilemma, he had again recourse to argument.

"Clara," he said, "I am, as I have repeatedly said, your only relation and guardian—if there be any real reason why you ought not to receive, and, at least, make a civil reply to such a negotiation as the Earl of Etherington has thought fit to open, surely I ought to be intrusted with it. You enjoyed far too much of that liberty which you seem to prize so highly during my father's lifetime—in the last years of it at least—have you formed any foolish attach-

ment during that time, which now prevents you from receiving such a visit as Lord Etherington has threatened?"

"Threatened!—the expression is well chosen," said Miss Mowbray; "and nothing can be more dreadful than such a threat, excepting its accomplishment."

"I am glad your spirits are reviving," replied her brother; "but that is no answer to my question."

"Is it necessary," said Clara, "that one must have actually some engagement or entanglement, to make them unwilling to be given in marriage, or even to be pestered upon such a subject?—Many young men declare they intend to die bachelors, why may not I be permitted to commence old maid at three-and-twenty?—Let me do so, like a kind brother, and there were never nephews and nieces so petted and so scolded, so nursed and so cuffed by a maiden aunt, as your children, when you have them, shall be by aunt Clara."

"And why not say all this to Lord Etherington?" said Mowbray; "wait until he propose

such a terrible bugbear as matrimony, before you refuse to receive him. Who knows, the whim that he hinted at may have passed away—he was, as you say, flirting with Lady Binks, and her ladyship has a good deal of address as well as beauty."

"Heaven improve both, (in an honest way,) if she will but keep his lordship to herself!" said Clara.

"Well, then," continued her brother, "things standing thus, I do not think you will have much trouble with his lordship—no more, perhaps, than just to give him a civil denial. After having spoken on such a subject to a man of my condition, he cannot well break off without you give him an apology."

"If that is all," said Clara, "he shall, as soon as he gives me an opportunity, receive such an answer as will leave him at liberty to woo any one whatsoever of Eve's daughters, excepting Clara Mowbray. Methinks I am so eager to set the captive free, that I wish as much for his lordship's appearance as I feared it a little while since."

ment during that time, which now prevents you from receiving such a visit as Lord Etherington has threatened?"

"Threatened!—the expression is well chosen," said Miss Mowbray; "and nothing can be more dreadful than such a threat, excepting its accomplishment."

"I am glad your spirits are reviving," replied her brother; "but that is no answer to my question."

"Is it necessary," said Clara, "that one must have actually some engagement or entanglement, to make them unwilling to be given in marriage, or even to be pestered upon such a subject?—Many young men declare they intend to die bachelors, why may not I be permitted to commence old maid at three-and-twenty?—Let me do so, like a kind brother, and there were never nephews and nieces so petted and so scolded, so nursed and so cuffed by a maiden aunt, as your children, when you have them, shall be by aunt Clara."

"And why not say all this to Lord Etherington?" said Mowbray; "wait until he propose

such a terrible bugbear as matrimony, before you refuse to receive him. Who knows, the whim that he hinted at may have passed away—he was, as you say, flirting with Lady Binks, and her ladyship has a good deal of address as well as beauty."

"Heaven improve both, (in an honest way,) if she will but keep his lordship to herself!" said Clara.

"Well, then," continued her brother, "things standing thus, I do not think you will have much trouble with his lordship—no more, perhaps, than just to give him a civil denial. After having spoken on such a subject to a man of my condition, he cannot well break off without you give him an apology."

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"Nay, nay, but let us go fair and softly," said her brother. "You are not to refuse him before he asks the question."

"Certainly," said Clara; "but I well know how to manage that—he shall never ask the question at all. I will restore Lady Binks's admirer, without accepting so much as a civility in ransom."

"Worse and worse, Clara," answered Mowbray; "you are to remember he is my friend and guest, and he must not be affronted in my house. Leave things to themselves.—Besides, consider an instant, Clara—were you not better take a little time for reflection in this case? The offer is a splendid one—title—fortune—and, what is more, a fortune which you will be well entitled to share largely in."

"This is beyond our implied treaty," said Clara. "I have yielded more than ever I thought I should have done, when I agreed that this Earl should be introduced to me on the footing of a common visitor; and now you talk favourably of his pretensions. This is an encroachment, Mowbray, and now I shall relapse into my obstinacy, and refuse to see him at all."

"Do as you will," replied Mowbray, sensible that it was only by working on her affections that he had any chance of carrying a point against her inclination,—"Do as you will, my dear Clara; but, for heaven's sake, wipe your eyes."

"And behave myself," said she, trying to smile as she obeyed him,—"behave myself, you would say, like folks of this world; but the quotation is lost on you, who never read either Prior or Shakespeare."

"I thank heaven for that," said Mowbray. "I have enough to burden my brain, without carrying such a lumber of rhymes in it as you and Lady Pen do.—Come, that is right; go to the mirror, and make yourself decent."

A woman must be much borne down indeed by pain and suffering, when she totally loses all respect for her external appearance. The madwoman in Bedlam wears her garland of straw, with a certain air of pretension; and we have seen a widow whom we knew to be most sincerely affected by a recent deprivation, whose weeds, nevertheless, were arranged with a dolorous degree of grace, which amounted almost to co-

quetry. Clara Mowbray had also, negligent as she seemed to be of appearances, her own arts of the toilette, although of the most rapid and most simple character. She took off her little riding-hat, and, unbinding a lace of Indian gold which retained her locks, shook them in dark and glossy profusion over her very handsome form, which they overshadowed down to her slender waist; and while her brother stood looking on her with a mixture of pride, affection, and compassion, she arranged them with a large comb, and, without the assistance of any *femme d'atours*, wove them, in the course of a few minutes, into such a natural head-dress as we see on the statues of the Grecian nymphs.

"Now let me but find my best muff," she said; "come prince and peer, I will be ready to receive them."

"Pshaw! your muff—who has heard of such a thing these twenty years? Muffs were out of fashion before you were born."

"No matter, John," replied his sister; "when a woman wears a muff, especially a determined old maid like myself, it is a sign she has no in-

tentions to scratch; and therefore the muff serves all the purposes of a white flag, and prevents the necessity of drawing on a glove, so prudentially recommended by the motto of our cousins, the M'Intoshes."

"Be it as you will then," said Mowbray; "for other than you do will it, you will not suffer it to be.—But how is this!—another billet?—We are in request this morning."

"Now, Heaven send his lordship may have judiciously considered all the risks which he is sure to encounter on this charmed ground, and resolved to leave his adventure unattempted," said Miss Mowbray.

Her brother glanced a look of displeasure at her, as he broke the seal of the letter, which was addressed to him with the words, "Haste and secrecy," written on the envelope. The contents, which greatly surprised him, we remit to the commencement of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER XI.

### PRIVATE INFORMATION.

———Ope this letter,
I can produce a champion that will prove
What is avouched there.——

*King Lear.*

The billet which Mowbray received, and read in his sister's presence, contained these words :—

" Sir,

" Clara Mowbray has few friends—none, perhaps, excepting yourself, in right of blood, and the writer of this letter, by right of the fondest, truest, and most disinterested attachment that ever man bore to woman. I am thus explicit with you, because, though it is unlikely that I

should ever again see or speak with your sister, I am desirous that you should be clearly acquainted with the cause of that interest, which I must always, even to my dying breath, take in her affairs.

"The person calling himself Lord Etherington is, I am aware, in the neighbourhood of Shaws-Castle, with the intention of paying his addresses to Miss Mowbray; and it is easy for me to foresee, arguing according to the ordinary views of mankind, that he may place his proposals in such a light as may make them seem highly desirable. But ere you give this person the encouragement which his offers may seem to deserve, please to inquire whether his fortune is certain, or his rank indisputable; and be not satisfied with light evidence on either point. A man may be in possession of an estate and title, to which he has no better right than his own rapacity and forwardness of assumption; and supposing Mr Mowbray jealous, as he must be, of the honour of his family, the alliance of such a one cannot but bring disgrace. This comes from one who will make good what he has written."

On the first perusal of a billet so extraordinary, Mowbray was inclined to set it down to the malice of some of the people at the Well, anonymous letters being no uncommon resource of the small wits who frequent such places of general resort, as a species of deception safely and easily executed, and well calculated to produce much mischief and confusion. But upon closer consideration, he was shaken in this opinion, and, starting suddenly from the reverie into which he had fallen, asked for the messenger who had brought the letter. "He was in the hall," the servant thought, and Mowbray ran to the hall. No—the messenger was not there, but Mowbray might see his back as he walked up the avenue.—He hollo'd—no answer was returned—he ran after the fellow, whose appearance was that of a countryman. The man quickened his pace as he saw himself pursued, and when he got out of the avenue, threw himself into one of the numerous by-paths which wanderers, who strayed in quest of nuts, or for the sake of exercise, had made in various directions through the extensive copse which surrounded

the castle, and was doubtless the reason of its acquiring the name of Shaws, which signifies, in the Scottish dialect, a wood of this description.

Irritated by the man's obvious desire to avoid him, and naturally obstinate in all his resolutions, Mowbray pursued for a considerable way, until he fairly lost breath; and the flier having been long out of sight, he recollected at length that his engagement with the Earl of Etherington required his attendance at the Castle.

The young lord, indeed, had arrived at Shaws-Castle, so few minutes after Mowbray's departure, that it was wonderful they had not met in the avenue. The servant to whom he applied, conceiving that his master must return instantly, as he had gone out without his hat, ushered the Earl, without farther ceremony, into the breakfast-room, where Clara was seated upon one of the window-seats, so busily employed with a book, or perhaps with her own thoughts while she held a book in her hands, that she scarce raised her head, until Lord Etherington advancing, pronounced the words, "Miss Mowbray." A

start, and a loud scream, announced her deadly alarm, and these were repeated as he made one pace nearer, and in a firmer accent said, "Clara."

"No nearer—no nearer," she exclaimed, "if you would have me look upon you and live!" Lord Etherington remained standing, as if uncertain whether to advance or retreat, while with incredible rapidity she poured out her hurried entreaties that he would begone, sometimes addressing him as a real personage, sometimes, and more frequently, as a delusive phantom, the offspring of her own excited imagination. "I knew it," she muttered, "I knew what would happen, if my thoughts were forced into that fearful channel.—Speak to me, brother! speak to me while I have reason left, and tell me that what stands before me is but an empty shadow! But it is no shadow—it remains before me in all the lineaments of mortal substance!"

"Clara," said the Earl, with a firm, yet softened voice, "collect and compose yourself. I am, indeed, no shadow—I am a much injured man, come to demand rights which have been unjustly withheld from me. I am now armed

with power as well as justice, and my claims shall be heard."

"Never—never!" replied Clara Mowbray; "since extremity is my portion, let extremity give me courage.—You have no rights—none—I know you not, and I defy you."

"Defy me not, Clara Mowbray," answered the Earl, in a tone, and with a manner—how different from those which delighted society! for now he was solemn, tragic, and almost stern, like the judge when he passes sentence upon a criminal. "Defy me not," he repeated. "I am your Fate, and it rests with you to make me a kind or severe one."

"Dare you speak thus?" said Clara, her eyes flashing with anger, while her lips grew white, and quivered for fear—"Dare you speak thus, and remember that the same heaven is above our heads, to which you so solemnly vowed you would never see me more without my own consent?"

"That vow was conditional—Francis Tyrrel, as he calls himself, swore the same—hath *he* not seen you?" He fixed a piercing look on her;

"He has—you dare not disown it!—And shall an oath, which to him is but a cobweb, be to me a shackle of iron?"

"Alas! it was but for a moment," said Miss Mowbray, sinking in courage, and drooping her head as she spoke.

"Were it but the twentieth part of an instant—the least conceivable space of subdivided time—still, you *did* meet—he saw you—you spoke to him. And me also you must see—me also you must hear! Or I will first claim you for my own in the face of the world; and, having vindicated my rights, I will seek out and extinguish the wretched rival who has dared to interfere with them."

"Can you speak thus?" said Clara—"Can you so burst through the ties of nature?—Have you a heart?"

"I have; and it shall be moulded like wax to your slightest wishes, if you agree to do me justice; but not granite, nor aught else that nature has of hardest, will be more inflexible if you continue an useless opposition!—Clara Mowbray, I am your Fate."

"Not so, proud man," said Clara, rising. "God gave not one potsherd the power to break another, save by His divine permission—my fate is in the will of Him, without whose will even a sparrow falls not to the ground.—Begone—I am strong in faith of heavenly protection."

"Do you speak thus in sincerity?" said the Earl of Etherington; "consider first what is the prospect before you. I stand here in no doubtful or ambiguous character—I offer not the mere name of a husband—propose to you not a humble lot of obscurity and hardship, with fears for the past and doubts for the future; yet there *was* a time when to a suit like this you could listen favourably.—I stand high among the nobles of the country, and offer you, as my bride, your share in my honours, and in the wealth which becomes them.—Your brother is my friend, and favours my suit. I will raise from the ground, and once more render illustrious, your ancient house—your motions shall be regulated by your wishes, even by your caprices—I will even carry my self-denial so far, that you shall, should you insist on so severe a measure, have your own

residence, your own establishment, and without intrusion on my part, until the most devoted love, the most unceasing attentions, shall make way on your inflexible disposition.—All this I will consent to for the future—all that is passed shall be concealed from the public.—But mine, Clara Mowbray, you must be."

"Never—never!" said she, with increasing vehemence. "I can but repeat a negative, but it shall have all the force of an oath.—Your rank is nothing to me—your fortune I scorn—my brother has no right, by the law of Scotland, or of nature, to compel my inclinations.—I detest your treachery, and I scorn the advantage you propose to attain by it.—Should the law give you my hand, it would but award you that of a corpse."

"Alas! Clara," said the Earl, "you do but flutter in the net; but I will urge you no farther now—there is another encounter before me."

He was turning away, when Clara, springing forward, caught him by the arm, and repeated, in a low and impressive voice, the commandment, "Thou shalt do no murther!"

"Fear not any violence," he said, softening his voice, and attempting to take her hand, "but what may flow from your own severity.—Francis is safe from me, unless you are altogether unreasonable.—Allow me but what you cannot deny to any friend of your brother, the power of seeing you at times—suspend at least the impetuosity of your dislike to me, and I will, on my part, modify the current of my just and otherwise uncontrollable resentment."

Clara, extricating herself, and retreating from him, only replied, "There is a heaven above us, and THERE shall be judged our actions towards each other! You abuse a power most treacherously obtained—you break a heart that never did you wrong—you seek an alliance with a wretch who only wishes to be wedded to her grave.—If my brother brings you hither, I cannot help it—and if your coming prevents bloody and unnatural violence, it is so far well.—But by my consent you come *not;* and were the choice mine, I would rather be struck with lifelong blindness, than that my eyes should again open on your person—rather that my ears were

stuffed with the earth of the grave, than that they should again hear your voice!"

The Earl of Etherington smiled proudly, and replied, "Even this, madam, I can bear without resentment. Anxious and careful as you are to deprive your compliance of every grace and of every kindness, I receive the permission to wait on you, as I interpret your words."

"Do not so interpret them," she replied; "I do but submit to your presence as an unavoidable evil. Heaven be my witness, that, were it not to prevent greater and more desperate evil, I would not even so far acquiesce."

"Let acquiescence, then, be the word," he said; "and so thankful will I be, even for your acquiescence, Miss Mowbray, that all shall remain private, which I conceive you do not wish to be disclosed; and, unless absolutely compelled to it in self-defence, you may rely, no violence will be resorted to by me in any quarter.—I relieve you from my presence."

So saying, he withdrew from the apartment.

## CHAPTER XII.

### EXPLANATORY.

——By your leave, gentle wax.
*Shakespeare.*

In the hall of Shaws-Castle the Earl of Etherington met Mowbray, returned from his fruitless chase after the bearer of the anonymous epistle before recited; and who had but just learned, on his return, that the Earl of Etherington was with his sister. There was a degree of mutual confusion when they met; for Mowbray had the contents of the anonymous letter fresh in his mind, and Lord Etherington, notwithstanding all the coolness which he had endeavoured to maintain, had not gone through the scene with

Clara without discomposure. Mowbray asked the Earl whether he had seen his sister, and invited him, at the same time, to return to the parlour; and his lordship replied, in a tone as indifferent as he could assume, that he had enjoyed the honour of the lady's company for several minutes, and would not now intrude farther upon Miss Mowbray's patience.

"You have had such a reception as was agreeable, my lord, I trust?" said Mowbray. "I hope Clara did the honours of the house with propriety during my absence?"

"Miss Mowbray seemed a little fluttered with my sudden appearance," said the Earl; "the servant shewed me in rather abruptly; and, circumstanced as we are, there is always awkwardness in a first meeting, where there is no third party to act as master of ceremonies.—I suspect, from the lady's looks, that you have not quite kept my secret, my good friend. I myself, too, felt a little consciousness in approaching Miss Mowbray—but it is over now; and the ice being fairly broken, I hope to have other and more convenient opportunities to improve the advan-

tage I have just gained in acquiring your lovely sister's personal acquaintance."

"So be it," said Mowbray; "but, as you declare for leaving the Castle just now, I must first speak a single word with your lordship, for which this place is not altogether convenient."

"I can have no objections, my dear Jack," said Etherington, following him with a thrill of conscious feeling, somewhat perhaps like that of the spider when he perceives his deceitful web is threatened with injury, and sits balanced in the centre, watching every point, and uncertain which he may be called upon first to defend. Such is one part, and not the slightest, of the penance which never fails to wait on those, who, abandoning the "fair play of the world," endeavour to work out their purposes by a process of deception and intrigue.

"My lord," said Mowbray, when they had entered a little apartment, in which the latter kept his guns, fishing-tackle, and other implements of sport, "you have played on the square with me; nay, more—I am bound to allow you have given me great odds. I am therefore not en-

titled to hear any reports to the prejudice of your lordship's character, without instantly communicating them. There is an anonymous letter which I have just received. Perhaps your lordship may know the hand, and thus be enabled to detect the writer."

"I do know the hand," said the Earl, as he received the note from Mowbray; "and, allow me to say, it is the only one which could have dared to frame any calumny to my prejudice. I hope, Mr Mowbray, it is impossible for you to consider this infamous charge as anything but a falsehood?"

"My placing it in your lordship's hands, without farther inquiry, is a sufficient proof that I hold it such, my lord; at the same time, that I cannot doubt for a moment that your lordship has it in your power to overthrow so frail a calumny by the most satisfactory evidence."

"Unquestionably I can, Mr Mowbray," said the Earl; "for, besides my being in full possession of the estate and title of my father, the late Earl of Etherington, I have my father's contract of marriage, my own certificate

of baptism, and the evidence of the whole country, to establish my right. All these shall be produced with the least delay possible. You will not think it surprising that one does not travel with this sort of documents in one's post-chaise."

"Certainly not, my lord," said Mowbray; "it is sufficient they are forthcoming when called for.—But, may I inquire, my lord, who the writer of this letter is, and whether he has any particular spleen to gratify by this very impudent assertion, which is so easily capable of being disproved?"

"He is," said Etherington, "or, at least, has the reputation of being, I am sorry to say, a near—a very near relation of my own—in fact, a brother by the father's side, but illegitimate.—My father was fond of him—I loved him also, for he has uncommonly fine parts, and is accounted highly accomplished. But there is a strain of something irregular in his mind—a vein, in short, of madness, which breaks out in the usual manner, rendering the poor young man a dupe to vain imaginations of his own dignity and grandeur, which is perhaps the most ordinary effect of insanity,

and inspiring the deepest aversion against his nearest relatives, and against myself in particular. He is a man extremely plausible, both in speech and manners; so much so, that many of my friends think there is more vice than insanity in the irregularities which he commits; but I may, I hope, be forgiven, if I have formed a milder judgment of one supposed to be my father's son. Indeed, I cannot help being sorry for poor Frank, who might have made a very distinguished figure in the world."

"May I ask the gentleman's name, my lord?" said Mowbray.

"My father's indulgence gave him our family name of Tyrrel, with his own Christian name Francis; but his proper name, to which alone he has a right, is Martigny."

"Francis Tyrrel!" exclaimed Mowbray; "why, that is the name of the very person who made some disturbance at the Well just before your lordship arrived.—You may have seen an advertisement—a sort of placard."

"I have, Mr Mowbray," said the Earl. "Spare me on that subject, if you please—it

has formed a strong reason why I did not mention my connection with this unhappy man before; but it is no unusual thing for persons, whose imaginations are excited, to rush into causeless quarrels, and then to make discreditable retreats from them."

"Or," said Mr Mowbray, "he may have, after all, been prevented from reaching the place of rendezvous—it was that very day on which your lordship, I think, received your wound; and, if I mistake not, you hit the man from whom you got the hurt."

"Mowbray," said his brother, lowering his voice, and taking him by the arm, "it is true that I did so—and, truly glad I am to observe, that, whatever might have been the consequences of such an accident, they cannot have been serious.—It struck me afterwards, that the man by whom I was so strangely assaulted, had some resemblance to the unfortunate Tyrrel—but I had not seen him for years.—At any rate, he cannot have been much hurt, since he is now able to resume his intrigues to the prejudice of my character."

"Your lordship views the thing with a firm eye," said Mowbray; "firmer than I think most people would be able to command, who had so narrow a chance of a scrape so uncomfortable."

"Why, I am, in the first place, by no means sure that the risk existed," said the Earl of Etherington; "for, as I have often told you, I had but a very transient glimpse of the ruffian; and, in the second place, I *am* sure that no permanent bad consequences have ensued. I am too old a fox-hunter to be afraid of a leap after it is cleared, as they tell of the fellow who fainted in the morning at the sight of the precipice he had clambered over when he was drunk on the night before. The man who wrote that letter," touching it with his finger, "is alive, and able to threaten me; and if he did come to any hurt from my hand, it was in the act of attempting my life, of which I shall carry the mark to my grave."

"Nay, I am far from blaming your lordship," said Mowbray, "for what you did in self-defence, but the circumstance might have turned out very unpleasant.—May I ask what you intend to do with this unfortunate gentleman, who is in all probability in the neighbourhood?"

"I must first discover the place of his retreat," said Lord Etherington, "and then consider what is to be done both for his safety, poor fellow, and my own. It is probable, too, that he may find sharpers to prey upon what fortune he still possesses, which, I assure you, is sufficient to attract a set of folks, who may ruin while they humour him.—May I beg that you, too, will be on the out-look, and let me know if you hear or see more of him?"

"I shall, most certainly, my lord," answered Mowbray; "but the only one of his haunts which I know, is the Old Cleikum Inn, where he chose to take up his residence. He has now left it, but perhaps the old crab-fish of a landlady may know something of him."

"I will not fail to inquire," said Lord Etherington; and, with these words, took a kind farewell of Mowbray, mounted his horse, and rode up the avenue.

"A cool fellow," said Mowbray, as he looked after him, "d—d cool fellow, this brother-in-law of mine, that is to be—takes a shot at his father's son with as little remorse as at a black

cock—what would he do with me, were we to quarrel?—Well, I can snuff a candle and strike out the ace of hearts; and so, should things go wrong, he has no Jack Raw to deal with, but Jack Mowbray."

Meanwhile, the Earl of Etherington hastened home to his own apartments at the Hotel; and, not entirely pleased with the events of the day, commenced a letter to his correspondent, agent, and confidant, Captain Jekyl, with which we have fortunately the means of presenting our readers.—

"Friend Harry,

"They say a falling house is best known by the rats leaving it—a falling state, by the desertion of confederates and allies—and a falling man, by the desertion of his friends. If this be true augury, your last letter may be considered as ominous of my breaking down. Methinks, you have gone far enough, and shared deep enough with me, to have some confidence in my *savoir faire*—some little faith both in my means and management.—What cross-grained fiend has at once

inspired you with what I suppose you wish me to call politic doubts and scruples of conscience, but which I can only regard as symptoms of fear and disaffection? You can have no idea of 'duels betwixt relations so nearly connected'—and 'the affair seems very delicate and intricate'—and again, 'the matter has never been fully explained to you'—and, moreover, 'if you are expected to take an active part in the business, it must be when you are honoured with my full and unreserved confidence, otherwise how could you be of the use to me which I might require?' Such are your expressions.

"Now, as to scruples of conscience about near relations, and so forth, all that has blown by without much mischief, and certainly is not likely to occur again—besides, did you never hear of friends quarrelling before? And are they not to exercise the usual privileges of gentlemen when they do? Moreover, how am I to know that this plaguy fellow *is* actually related to me?—They say it is a wise child knows its own father; and I cannot be expected wise enough to know to a certainty my father's son.—So much for relation-

ship.—Then, as to full and unreserved confidence—why, Harry, this is just as if I were to ask you to look at a watch, and tell what it was o'clock, and you were to reply, that truly you could not inform me, because you had not examined the springs, the counter-balances, the wheels, and the whole internal machinery of the little time-piece.—But the upshot of the whole is this. Harry Jekyl, who is as sharp a fellow as any other, thinks he has his friend Lord Etherington at a dead-lock, and that he knows already so much of the said noble lord's history as to oblige his lordship to tell him the whole. And perhaps he not unreasonably concludes, that the custody of a whole secret is more creditable, and probably more lucrative, than that of a half one; and, in short,—he is resolved to make the most of the cards in his hand. Another, mine honest Harry, would take the trouble to recall to your mind past times and circumstances, and conclude with expressing a humble opinion, that if Harry Jekyl was asked *now* to do any service for the noble lord aforesaid, Harry had got his reward in his pocket aforehand. But I do not argue thus,

because I would rather be leagued with a friend who assists me with a view to future profit, than from respect to benefits already received. The first lies like the fox's scent when on his last legs, increasing every moment; the other is a back-scent, growing colder the longer you follow it, until at last it becomes impossible to puzzle it out. I will, therefore, submit to circumstances, and tell you the whole story, though somewhat tedious, in hopes that I can conclude with such a trail as you will open upon breast high.

"Thus then it was.—Francis, fifth Earl of Etherington, and my much-honoured father, was what is called a very eccentric man—that is, he was neither a wise man nor a fool—had too much sense to walk into a well, and yet in some of the furious fits which he was visited with, I have seen him quite mad enough to throw any one else into it.—Men said there was a lurking insanity—but it is an ill bird, &c., and I will say no more about it. This shatter-brained peer was, in other respects, a handsome accomplished man, with an expression somewhat haughty, yet singularly pleasing when he chose it—a man, in

short, who might push his fortune with the fair sex.

" Lord Etherington, such as I have described him, being upon his travels in France, formed an attachment of the heart—ay, and some have pretended, of the hand also, with a certain beautiful orphan, Marie de Martigny. Of this union is said to have sprung, (for I am determined not to be certain on that point,) that most incommodious person, Francis Tyrrel, as he calls himself, but as I would rather call him, Francis Martigny; the latter suiting my views, as perhaps the former name agrees better with his pretensions. Now, I am too good a son to subscribe to the alleged regularity of the marriage between my right honourable and very good lord father, because my said right honourable and very good lord did, on his return to England, become wedded, in the face of the church, to my very affectionate and well-endowed mother, Ann Bulmer of Bulmer-hall, from which happy union sprung I, Francis Valentine Bulmer Tyrrel, lawful inheritor of my father and mother's joint estates, as I was the proud possessor of

their ancient names. But the noble and wealthy pair, though blessed with such a pledge of love as myself, lived mighty ill together, and the rather, when my right honourable father, sending for this other Sosia, this unlucky Francis Tyrrel, senior, from France, insisted, in the face of propriety, that he should reside in his house, and share, in all respects, in the opportunities of education by which the real Sosia, Francis Valentine Bulmer Tyrrel, then commonly called Lord Oakendale, hath profited in such an uncommon degree.

"Various were the matrimonial quarrels which arose between the honoured lord and lady, in consequence of this unseemly conjunction of the legitimate and illegitimate; and to these, we, the subjects of the dispute, were sometimes very properly, as well as decorously, made the witnesses. On one occasion, my right honourable mother, who was a free-spoken lady, found the language of her own rank quite inadequate to express the strength of her generous feelings, and borrowing from the vulgar two emphatic words, applied them to Marie de Martigny, and

her son Francis Tyrrel. Never did Earl that ever wore coronet, fly into a pitch of more uncontrollable rage, than did my right honourable father; and, in the ardour of his reply, he adopted my mother's phraseology, to inform her that if there *was* a whore and bastard connected with his house, it was herself and her brat.

"I was even then a sharp little fellow, and was incredibly struck with the communication, which, in an hour of uncontrollable irritation, had escaped my right honourable father. It is true, he instantly gathered himself up again; and he perhaps recollecting such a word as *bigamy*, and my mother, on her side, considering the consequences of such a thing as a descent from the Countess of Etherington into Mrs Bulmer, neither wife, maid, nor widow, there was an apparent reconciliation between them, which lasted for some time. But the speech remained deeply imprinted on my remembrance; the more so, that once, when I was exerting over my friend Francis Tyrrel, the authority of a legitimate brother, and Lord Oakendale, old Cecil, my father's confidential valet, was so much scandalized as to in-

timate a possibility that we might one day change conditions. These two accidental communications seemed to me a key to certain long lectures, with which my father used to regale us boys, but me in particular, upon the extreme mutability of human affairs,—the disappointment of the best-grounded hopes and expectations,—and the necessity of being so accomplished in all useful branches of knowledge, as might, in case of accidents, supply any defalcation in our rank and fortune;—as if any art or science could make amends for the loss of an Earldom, and twelve thousand a-year! All this prosing seemed to my anxious mind designed to prepare me for some unfortunate change; and when I was old enough to make such private inquiries as lay in my power, I became still more persuaded that my right honourable father nourished some thoughts of making an honest woman of Marie de Martigny, and a legitimate elder brother of Francis, after his death at least, if not during his life. I was the more convinced of this, when a little affair, which I chanced to have with the daughter of my Tu——, drew down my father's wrath

upon me in great abundance, and occasioned my being banished to Scotland, along with my brother, under a very poor allowance, without introductions, except to one steady old Professor, and with the charge that I should not assume the title of Lord Oakendale, but content myself with my maternal grandfather's name of Valentine Bulmer, that of Francis Tyrrel being pre-occupied.

" Upon this occasion, notwithstanding the fear which I entertained of my father's passionate temper, I did venture to say, that since I was to resign my title, I thought I had a right to keep my family name, and that my brother might take his mother's. I wish you had seen the look of rage with which my father regarded me when I gave him this spirited hint. ' Thou art,' he said, and paused, as if to find out the bitterest epithet to supply the blank—' thou art thy mother's child, and her perfect picture'—(this seemed the severest reproach that occurred to him.)—' Bear her name then, and bear it with patience and in secrecy; or I here give you my word, you shall never bear another the whole

days of your life.' This sealed my mouth with a witness; and then, in allusion to my flirtation with the daughter of my Tu—— aforesaid, he enlarged on the folly and iniquity of private marriages, warned me that in the country I was going to, the matrimonial noose often lies hid under flowers, and that folks find it twitched round their neck when they least expect such a cravat; assured me, that he had very particular views for settling Francis and me in life, and that he would forgive neither of us who should, by any such rash entanglement, render them unavailing.

"This last minatory admonition was the more tolerable, that my rival had his share of it; and so we were bundled off to Scotland, coupled up like two pointers in a dog-cart, and—I can speak for one at least—with much the same uncordial feelings towards each other. I often, indeed, detected Francis looking at me with a singular expression, as of pity and anxiety, and once or twice he seemed disposed to enter on something respecting the situation in which we stood towards each other; but I felt no desire to encou-

rage his confidence. Meantime, as we were called, by our father's directions, not brothers, but cousins, so we came to bear towards each other the habits of companionship, though scarcely of friendship. What Francis thought, I know not; for my part, I must confess, that I lay by on the watch for some opportunity when I might mend my own situation with my father, though at the prejudice of my rival. And Fortune, while she seemed to prevent such an opportunity, involved us both in one of the strangest and most complicated mazes that her capricious divinityship ever wove, and out of which I am even now struggling, by sleight or force, to extricate myself. I can hardly help wondering, even yet, at the odd conjunction, which has produced such an intricacy of complicated incidents.

"My father was a great sportsman, and Francis and I had both inherited his taste for field-sports, but I in a keener and more ecstatic degree. Edinburgh, which is a tolerable residence in winter and spring, becomes disagreeable in summer, and in autumn is the most melancholy sejour that ever poor mortals were condemned to.

No public places are open, no inhabitant of any consideration remains in the town; those who cannot get away, hide themselves in obscure corners, as if ashamed to be seen in the streets—the gentry go to their country-houses—the citizens to their sea-bathing quarters—the lawyers to their circuits—the writers to visit their country clients—and all the world to the moors to shoot grouse. We, who felt the indignity of remaining in town during this deserted season, obtained, with some difficulty, permission from the Earl to betake ourselves to any obscure corner, and shoot grouse, if we could get leave to do so on our general character of English students at the University of Edinburgh, without quoting anything more.

"The first year of our banishment we went to the neighbourhood of the Highlands; but finding our sport interrupted by game-keepers and their gillies, on the second occasion we established ourselves at this little village of St Ronan's, where there was then no Spaw, no fine people, no card tables, no quizzes, excepting the old quiz of a landlady, with whom we lod-

ged. We found the place much to our mind; the old landlady had interest with some old fellow, agent of a non-residing nobleman, who gave us permission to sport over his moors, of which I availed myself keenly, and Francis with more moderation. He was, indeed, of a grave musing sort of habit, and often preferred solitary walks, in the wild and beautiful scenery with which the village is surrounded, to the use of the gun. He was attached to fishing moreover, that dullest of human amusements, and this also tended to keep us considerably apart. This gave me rather pleasure than concern;—not that I hated Francis at that time; nay, not that I greatly disliked his society; but merely because it was unpleasant to be always with one whose fortunes I apprehended to stand in direct opposition to my own. I also rather despised the indifference about sport, which indeed seemed to grow upon him; but my gentleman had better taste than I was aware of. If he sought no grouse on the hill, he had flushed a pheasant in the wood.

"Clara Mowbray, daughter of the Lord of the more picturesque than wealthy domain of St

Ronan's, was at that time scarce sixteen years old, and as wild and beautiful a woodland nymph as the imagination can fancy—simple as a child in all that concerned the world and its ways, acute as a needle in every point of knowledge which she had found an opportunity of becoming acquainted with; fearing harm from no one, and with a lively and natural strain of wit, which brought amusement and gaiety wherever she came. Her motions were under no restraint, save that of her own inclination; for her father, though a cross, peevish, old man, was confined to his chair with the gout, and her only companion, a girl of somewhat inferior caste, bred up in the utmost deference to Miss Mowbray's fancies, served for company indeed in her strolls through the wild country on foot and on horseback, but never thought of controlling her will and pleasure.

"The extreme loneliness of the country, (at that time,) and the simplicity of its inhabitants, seemed to render these excursions perfectly safe. Francis, happy dog, became the companion of the damsels on such occasions

through the following accident. Miss Mowbray had dressed herself and her companion like country wenches, with a view to surprise the family of one of their better sort of farmers. They had accomplished their purpose greatly to their satisfaction, and were hying home after sunset, when they were encountered by a country fellow—a sort of Harry Jekyl in his way, who, being equipped with a glass or two of whisky, saw not the nobility of blood through her disguise, and accosted the daughter of a hundred sires, as he would have done a ewe-milker. Miss Mowbray remonstrated—her companion screamed—up came cousin Francis with a fowling-piece on his shoulder, and soon put the sylvan to flight.

"This was the beginning of an acquaintance, which had gone great lengths before I found it out.—The fair Clara, it seems, found it safer to roam in the woods with an escort than alone, and my studious and sentimental relative was almost her constant companion. At their age, it was likely that some time might pass ere they came to understand each other; but full confidence

and intimacy was established between them ere I heard of their amour.

"And here, Harry, I must pause till next morning, and send you the conclusion under a separate cover. The rap which I had over the elbow the other day, is still tingling at the end of my fingers, and you must not be critical upon my manuscript."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### LETTER CONTINUED.

——— Must I then ravel out
My weaved-up follies ?———

*Shakespeare.*

"I RESUME my pen, Harry, to mention, without attempting to describe my surprise, when, compelled by circumstances, Francis made me the confidant of his love-intrigue. My grave cousin in love, and very much in the mind of approaching the perilous verge of clandestine marriage—he who used every now and then, not much to the improvement of our cordial regard, to lecture me upon filial duty, just upon the point of slipping the bridle himself! I could not for my life tell whether surprise, or a feeling of

mischievous satisfaction, was predominant. I tried to talk to him as he used to talk to me; but I had not the gift of persuasion, or he the power of understanding the words of wisdom. He insisted our situation was different—that his unhappy birth, as he termed it, freed him at least from dependence on his father's absolute will —that he had, by bequest from some relative of his mother, a moderate competence, which Miss Mowbray had consented to share with him; in fine, that he desired not my counsel but my assistance. A moment's consideration convinced me, that I should be unkind, not to him only but to myself, unless I gave him all the backing I could in this his most dutiful scheme. I recollected our right honourable father's denunciations against Scotch marriages, and secret marriages of all sorts,—denunciations perhaps not the less vehement, that he might feel some secret prick of conscience on the subject himself. I remembered that my grave brother had always been a favourite, and I forgot not—how was it possible I could forget—those ominous expressions which

intimated a possibility of the hereditary estate and honours being transferred to the elder, instead of the younger son. Now, it required no conjuror to foresee, that should Francis commit this inexpiable crime of secretly allying himself with a Scotch beauty, our sire would lose all wish to accomplish such a transference in his favour; and while my brother's merits were altogether obscured by such an unpardonable act of disobedience, my own, no longer overshadowed by prejudice or partiality, would shine forth in all their natural brilliancy. These considerations, which flashed on me with the rapidity of lightning, induced me to consent to hold Frank's back-hand, during the perilous game he proposed to play. I had only to take care that my own share in the matter should not be so prominent as to attract my father's attention; and this I was little afraid of, for his wrath was usually of that vehement and forcible character, which, like lightning, is attracted to one single point, there bursting with violence as undivided as it was uncontrollable.

"I soon found the lovers needed my assistance more than I could have supposed; for they were absolute novices in a sort of intrigue, which to me seemed as easy and natural as lying. Francis had been detected by some tattling spy in his walks with Clara, and the news had been carried to old Mowbray, who was greatly incensed at his daughter, though little knowing that her crime was greater than admitting an unknown English student to form a personal acquaintance with her. He prohibited farther intercourse—resolved, in justice of peace phrase, to rid the country of us; and, prudently sinking all mention of his daughter's delinquency, commenced an action against Francis, under pretext of punishing him as an encroacher upon his game, but in reality to scare him from the neighbourhood. His person was particularly described to all the keepers and satellites about Shaws-Castle, and any personal intercourse betwixt him and Clara became impossible, except under the most desperate risks. Nay, such was their alarm, that Master Francis thought it prudent, for Miss Mowbray's sake, to withdraw as far as a town

called Marchthorn, and there to conceal himself, maintaining his intercourse with Clara only by letter.

"It was then I became the sheet-anchor of the hope of the lovers; it was then my early dexterity and powers of contrivance were first put to the test; and it would be too long to tell you in how many shapes, and by how many contrivances, I acted as agent, letter-carrier, and go-between, to maintain the intercourse of these separated turtles. —I have had a good deal of trouble in that way on my own account, but never half so much as I took on account of this brace of lovers. I scaled walls and swam rivers, set blood-hounds, quarter-staves, and blunderbusses at defiance; and, excepting the distant prospect of self-interest which I have hinted at, I was neither to have honour nor reward for my pains. I will own to you, that Clara Mowbray was so very beautiful—so absolutely confiding in her lover's friend—and thrown into such close intercourse with me, that there were times when I thought that, in conscience, she ought not to have scrupled to have contributed a mite to reward the faithful labourer.

But then, she looked like purity itself; and I was such a novice at that time of day, that I did not know how it might have been possible for me to retreat, if I had made too bold an advance—and, in short, I thought it best to content myself with assisting true love to run smooth, in hopes it would assure me, in the long-run, an Earl's title and an Earl's fortune.

"Nothing was therefore ventured on my part which could raise suspicion, and, as the confidential friend of the lovers, I prepared everything for their secret marriage. The pastor of the parish agreed to perform the ceremony, prevailed upon by an argument which I used to him, and which Clara, had she guessed it, would have little thanked me for. I led the honest man to believe, that, in declining to do his office, he might prevent a too successful lover from doing justice to a betrayed maiden; and the parson, who, I found, had a spice of romance in his disposition, resolved, under such pressing circumstances, to do them the kind office of binding them together, although the consequence might be a charge of irregularity against himself. Old Mowbray was much confined to his room, his

daughter less watched since Frank had removed from the neighbourhood—the brother, (which, by the by, I should have said before) not then in the country—and it was settled that the lovers should meet at the Old Kirk when the twilight became deep, and go off in a chaise for England so soon as the ceremony was performed.

"When all this was arranged save the actual appointment of the day, you cannot conceive the happiness and the gratitude of my sage brother. He looked upon himself as approaching to the seventh heaven, instead of losing his chance of a good fortune, and encumbering himself at eighteen with a wife, and all the probabilities of narrow circumstances, and an increasing family. Though so much younger myself, I could not help wondering at his extreme want of knowledge of the world, and feeling ashamed that I had ever allowed him to take the airs of a tutor with me; and this conscious superiority supported me against the thrill of jealousy which always seized me when I thought of his carrying off the beautiful prize, which, without my address, he could never have made his own.—But at this important crisis, I had a letter from my father,

which, by some accident, had long lain at our lodgings in Edinburgh; had then visited our former quarters in the Highlands; again returned to Edinburgh, and at length reached me at Marchthorn in a most critical time.

"It was in reply to a letter of mine, in which, among other matters, such as good boys send to their papas, descriptions of the country, account of studies, exercise, and so forth, I had, to fill up the sheet to a dutiful length, thrown in something about the family of St Ronan's, in the neighbourhood of whom I was writing. I had no idea what an effect the name must have produced on the mind of my right honourable father, but his letter sufficiently expressed it. He charged me to cultivate the acquaintance of Mr Mowbray as fast and as intimately as possible; and, if need were, to inform him candidly of our real character and situation in life. Wisely considering, at the same time, that his filial admonition might be neglected if not backed by some sufficient motive, his lordship frankly let me into the secret of my grand-uncle by the mother's side, Mr S. Mow-

bray of Nettlewood's last will and testament, by which I saw, to my astonishment and alarm, that a large and fair estate was bequeathed to the eldest son and heir of the Earl of Etherington, on condition of his forming a matrimonial alliance with a lady of the house of Mowbray, of St Ronan's.—Mercy of heaven! how I stared! Here had I been making every preparation for wedding Francis to the very girl, whose hand would insure to myself wealth and independence!—And even the first loss, though great, was not like to be the last. My father spoke of the marriage like a land-surveyor, but of the estate of Nettlewood like an impassioned lover. He seemed to doat on every acre of it, and dwelt on its contiguity to his own domains, as a circumstance which rendered the union of the estates not desirable merely, but constituted an arrangement pointed out by the hand of nature. And although he observed, that, on account of the youth of the parties, a treaty of marriage could not be immediately undertaken, it was yet clear he would approve at heart of any bold stroke which would abolish the interval of time that might other-

wise intervene ere Oakendale and Nettlewood became one property.

"Here, then, were shipwrecked my fair hopes. It was clear as sunshine, that a private marriage, unpardonable in the abstract, would become venial, nay, highly laudable, in my father's eyes, if it united his heir with Clara Mowbray; and if he really had, as my fears suggested, the means of establishing legitimacy on my brother's part, nothing was so likely to tempt him to use them, as the certainty that, by his doing so, Nettlewood and Oakendale would be united into one. The very catastrophe which I had prepared, as sure to exclude my rival from his father's favour, was thus likely, unless it could be prevented, to become a strong motive and argument for the Earl placing his rights above mine.

"I shut myself up in my bed-room; locked the door; read, and again read my father's letter; and, instead of giving way to idle passion, (beware of that, Harry, even in the most desperate circumstances,) I considered, with keen investigation, whether some remedy could not yet be found.—To break off the match for the time,

would have been easy—a little private information to Mr Mowbray would have done that with a vengeance—But then the treaty might be renewed under my father's auspices;—at all events, the share which I had taken in the intrigue between Clara and my brother, rendered it almost impossible for me to become a suitor in my own person.—Amid these perplexities, it suddenly occurred to my adventurous heart and contriving brain—what if I should personate the bridegroom?—This strange thought, you will recollect, occurred to a very youthful brain—it was banished—it returned—returned again and again—was viewed under every different shape—became familiar—was adopted.—It was easy to fix the appointment with Clara and the clergyman, for I managed the whole correspondence—the resemblance between Francis and me in stature and in proportion—the disguise which we were to assume—the darkness of the church—the hurry of the moment—might, I trusted, prevent Clara from recognizing me. To the minister I had only to say, that, though I had hitherto talked of a friend, I myself was the happy

man. My first name was Francis as well as his; and I had found Clara so gentle, so confiding, so flatteringly cordial in her intercourse with me, that, once within my power, and prevented from receding by shame, and a thousand contradictory feelings, I had, with the vanity of an *amoureux de seize ans*, the confidence to believe I could reconcile the fair lady to the exchange.

"There certainly never came such a thought into a madcap's brain; and, what is more extraordinary—but that you already know—it was so far successful, that the marriage ceremony was performed between us in the presence of a servant of mine, her accommodating companion, and the priest.—We got into the carriage, and were a mile from the church, when my unlucky or lucky brother stopped the chaise by force—through what means he had obtained knowledge of my little trick, I never have been able to learn. Solmes has been faithful to me in too many instances, that I should suspect him in this important crisis. I jumped out of the carriage, pitched fraternity to the devil, and, betwixt desperation and something very like shame, began

to cut away with a couteau de chasse, which I had provided in case of necessity.—All was in vain—I was hustled down under the wheel of the carriage, and, the horses taking fright, it went over my body.

"Here ends my narrative; for I neither heard nor saw more until I found myself stretched on a sick-bed many miles from the scene of action, and Solmes engaged in attending on me. In answer to my passionate inquiries, he briefly informed me, that Master Francis had sent back the young lady to her own dwelling, and that she appeared to be extremely ill in consequence of the alarm she had sustained. My own health, he assured me, was considered as very precarious, and added, that Tyrrel, who was in the same house, was in the utmost perturbation on my account. The very mention of his name brought on a crisis in which I brought up much blood; and it is singular that the physician who attended me—a grave gentleman, with a wig—considered that this was of service to me. I know it frightened me heartily, and prepared me for a visit from Master

Frank, which I endured with a tameness he would not have experienced, had the usual current of blood flowed in my veins. But sickness and the lancet make one very tolerant of sermonizing.—At last, in consideration of being relieved from his accursed presence, and the sound of his infernally calm voice, I slowly and reluctantly acquiesced in an arrangement, by which he proposed that we should for ever bid adieu to each other, and to Clara Mowbray. I would have hesitated at this last stipulation. 'She was, I said, 'my wife, and I was entitled to claim her as such.'

"This drew down a shower of most moral reproaches, and an assurance that Clara disowned and detested my alliance, and that where there had been an essential error in the person, the mere ceremony could never be accounted binding by the law of any Christian country. I wonder this had not occurred to me; but my ideas of marriage were much founded on plays and novels, where such devices as I had practised are often resorted to for winding up the plot, without any hint of their illegality; besides, I had

confided, as I mentioned before, a little too rashly perhaps, in my own powers of persuading so young a bride as Clara to be contented with one handsome fellow instead of another.

"Solmes took up the argument, when Francis released me by leaving the room. He spoke of my father's resentment, should this enterprize reach his ears—of the revenge of Mowbray of St Ronan's, whose nature was both haughty and rugged—of risk from the laws of the country, and God knows what bugbears beside, which, at a more advanced age, I would have laughed at. In a word, I sealed the capitulation, vowed perpetual absence, and banished myself, as they say in this country, forth of Scotland.

"And here, Harry, observe and respect my genius. Every circumstance was against me in this negotiation. I had been the aggressor in the war; I was wounded, and, it might be said, a prisoner in my antagonist's hands; yet I could so far avail myself of Monsieur Martigny's greater eagerness for peace, that I clogged the treaty with a condition highly advantageous to myself, and equally unfavourable to him.—Said Mr

Francis Martigny was to take upon himself the burthen of my right honourable father's displeasure; and our separation, which was certain to give immense offence, was to be represented as his work, not as mine. I insisted, tender-hearted, dutiful soul, as I was, that I would consent to no measure which was to bring down papa's displeasure. This was a *sine quo non* in our negotiation.

Voila ce que c'est d'avoir des talens!

Monsieur Francis would, I suppose, have taken the world on his shoulders, to have placed an eternal separation betwixt his turtle-dove and the falcon who had made so bold a pounce at her.—What he wrote to my father, I know not; as for myself, in all duty, I represented the bad state of my health from an accident, and that my brother and companion having been suddenly called from me by some cause which he had not explained, I had thought it necessary to get to London for the best advice, and only waited his lordship's permission to return to the paternal mansion. This I soon received, and found,

as I expected, that he was in towering wrath against my brother for his disobedience; and, after some time, I even had reason to think, (as, how could it be otherwise, Harry?) that, on becoming better acquainted with the merits and amiable manners of his apparent heir, he lost any desire which he might formerly have entertained, of accomplishing any change in my circumstances in relation to the world. Perhaps the old peer turned a little ashamed of his own conduct, and dared not aver to the congregation of the righteous, (for he became saintly in his latter days,) the very pretty frolics which he seems to have been guilty of in his youth. Perhaps, also, the death of my right honourable mother operated in my favour, since, while she lived, my chance was the worse—there is no saying what a man will do to spite his wife.—Enough, he died—slept with his right honourable fathers, and I became, without opposition, Right Honourable in his stead.

"How I have borne my new honours, thou, Harry, and our merry set, know full well. Newmarket and Tattersal's may tell the rest.—I think I have been as lucky as most men where luck is

most prized, and so I shall say no more on that subject.

"And now, Harry, I will suppose thee in a moralizing mood; that is, I will fancy the dice have run wrong—or your double-barrel has hung fire—or a certain lady has looked cross—or any such weighty cause of gravity has occurred, and you give me the benefit of your seriousness.—'My dear Etherington,' say you pithily, 'you are a precious fool!—Here you are, stirring up a business rather scandalous in itself, and fraught with mischief to all concerned—a business which might sleep for ever, if you let it alone, but which is sure, like a sea-coal fire, to burst into a flame if you go on poking it. I would like to ask your lordship only two questions,'—say you, with your usual graceful attitude of adjusting your perpendicular shirt-collar, and passing your hand over the knot of your cravat, which deserves a peculiar place in the *Tietania*—'only two questions—that is, Whether you do not repent the past?—And, Whether you do not fear the future?' Very comprehensive queries, these of yours, Harry; for they respect both the time past and the

time to come—one's whole life, in short. However, I shall endeavour to answer them as well as I may.

"Repent the past, said you?—Yes, Harry, I think I do repent the past—that is, not quite in the parson's style of repentance, which resembles your's when you have a head-ache, but as I would repent a hand at cards which I had played on false principles. I should have begun with the young lady—availed myself in a very different manner of Monsieur Martigny's absence, and my own intimacy with her, and thus superseded him, if possible, in the damsel's affections. The scheme I adopted, though there was, I think, both boldness and dexterity in it, was that of a nov[illegible] of premature genius, who could not calculate chances. So much for repentance.—Do I not fear the future?—Harry, I will not cut your throat for supposing you to have put the question, but calmly assure you, that I never feared anything in my life. I was born without the sensation, I believe; at least, it is perfectly unknown to me. When I felt that cursed wheel pass across my breast, when I felt the pis-

tol-ball benumb my arm, I felt no more agitation than at the bounce of a champagne-cork. But I would not have you think that I am fool enough to risk plague, trouble, and danger, (all of which, besides considerable expence, I am now prepared to encounter,) without some adequate motive,—and here it is.

"From various quarters, hints, rumours, and surmises have reached me, that an attack will be made on my rank and status in society, which can only be in behalf of this fellow Martigny, for I will not call him by his stolen name of Tyrrel. Now, this I hold to be a breach of the paction betwixt us, by which—that is, by its true meaning and purport—he was to leave my right honourable father and me to settle our own matters without his interference, which amounted to a virtual resignation of his rights, if the scoundrel ever had any. Can he expect I am to resign my wife, and, what is a better thing, old Scrogie Mowbray's estate of Nettlewood, to gratify the humour of a fellow who sets up claims to my title and whole property? No, by ——. If he assails me in a point so important, I will retaliate

upon him in one where he will feel as keenly; and that he may depend upon.—And now, methinks, you come upon me with a second edition of your grave remonstrances, about family feuds, unnatural rencontres, offence to all the feelings of all the world, et cætera, et cætera, which you might usher in most delectably with the old stave about brethren dwelling together in unity. I will not stop to inquire, whether all these delicate apprehensions are on account of the Earl of Etherington, his safety, and his reputation; or whether my friend Harry Jekyl be not considering how far his own interference with such a naughty business will be well taken at Head-quarters; and so, without pausing on that question, I will barely and briefly say, that you cannot be more sensible than I am of the madness of bringing matters to such an extremity—I have no such intention, I assure you, and it is with no such purpose that I invite you here.—Were I to challenge Martigny, he would refuse me the meeting; and all less ceremonious ways of arranging such an affair are quite old-fashioned.

"It is true, at our first meeting, I was betrayed into the scrape I told you of—just as you may have shot (or shot *at*, for I think you are no downright hitter,) a hen pheasant, when flushed within distance, by a sort of instinctive movement, without reflecting on the enormity you were about to commit. The truth is, there is an ignis fatuus influence, which seems to govern our house—it poured its wild fire through my father's veins—it has descended to me in full vigour, and every now and then its impulse is irresistible. There was my enemy, and here were my pistols, was all I had time to think about the matter. But I will be on my guard in future, the more surely, as I cannot receive any provocation from him; on the contrary, if I must confess the truth, though I was willing to gloss it a little in my first account of the matter, (like the Gazette, when recording a defeat,) I am certain he would never voluntarily have fired at me, and that his pistol went off as he fell. You know me well enough to be assured, that I will never be again in the scrape of attacking an unresisting antagonist, were he ten times my brother.

"Then, as to this long tirade about hating my brother—Harry, I do not hate him more than the first-born of Egypt are in general hated by those whom they exclude from entailed estates, and so forth—not one landed man in twenty of us that is not hated by his younger brothers, to the extent of wishing him quiet in his grave, as an abominable stumbling-block in their path of life; and so far only do I hate Monsieur Martigny. But for the rest, I rather like him as otherwise; and would he but die, would give my frank consent to his being canonized; and while he lives, I am not desirous that he should be exposed to any temptation from rank and riches, those main obstacles to the self-denying course of life, by which the Odour of Sanctity is attained.

"Here again you break in with your impertinent queries—If I have no purpose of quarrelling personally with Martigny, why do I come into collision with him at all?—why not abide by the treaty of Marchthorn, and remain in England, without again approaching St Ronan's, or claiming my maiden bride?

"Have I not told you, I want him to cease all threatened attempts upon my fortune and dignity? Have I not told you, that I want my wife, Clara Mowbray, and my estate of Nettlewood, fairly won by marrying her?—And to let you into the whole secret, though Clara is a very pretty woman, yet she goes for so little in the transaction with me, her unimpassioned bridegroom, that I hope to make some relaxation of my rights over her the means of obtaining the concessions which I think most important.

"I will not deny, that an aversion to awakening bustle, and encountering reproach, has made me so slow in looking after my interest, that the period will shortly expire, within which I ought, by old Scrog Mowbray's will, to qualify myself for becoming his heir, by being the accepted husband of Miss Mowbray of St Ronan's. Time was—time is—and, if I catch it not by the forelock as it passes, time will be no more—Nettlewood will be forfeited—and if I have in addition a law-suit for my title, and for Oakendale, I run a risk of being altogether capot-

ted. I must, therefore, act at all risks, and act with vigour—and this is the general plan of my campaign, subject always to be altered according to circumstances. I have obtained—I may say, purchased—Mowbray's consent to address his sister. I have this advantage, that if she agrees to take me, she will for ever put a stop to all disagreeable reports and recollections, founded on her former conduct. In that case I secure the Nettlewood property, and am ready to wage war for my paternal estate. Indeed, I firmly believe, that should this happy consummation take place, Monsieur Martigny will be too much heart-broken to make further fight, but will e'en throw helve after hatchet, and run to hide himself, after the fashion of a true lover, in some desert beyond seas.

"But, supposing the lady has the bad taste to be obstinate, and will none of me, I still think that her happiness, or her peace of mind, will be as dear to Martigny, as Gibraltar is to the Spaniards, and that he will sacrifice a great deal to induce me to give up my pretensions. Now, I shall want some one to act as my agent in communi-

cating with this fellow; for I will not deny that my old appetite for cutting his throat may awaken suddenly, were I to hold personal intercourse with him. Come thou, therefore, without delay, and hold my back-hand—Come, for you know me, and that I never left a kindness unrewarded. To be specific, you shall have means to pay off a certain inconvenient mortgage, without troubling the tribe of Issachar, if you will but be true to me in this matter—Come, therefore, without further apologies or further delay. There shall, I give you my word, neither be risk nor offence in the part of the drama which I intend to commit to your charge.

"Talking of the drama, we had a miserable attempt at a sort of bastard theatricals, at Mowbray's rat-gnawed mansion. There were two things worth noticing—One, that I lost all the courage on which I pique myself, and fairly fled from the pit, rather than present myself before Miss Clara Mowbray, when it came to the push. And upon this I pray you to remark, that I am a person of singular delicacy and modesty, instead of being the Drawcansir and Daredevil

that you would make of me. The other memorable is of a more delicate nature, respecting the conduct of a certain fair lady, who seemed determined to fling herself at my head. There is a wonderful degree of free-masonry among us folks of spirit; and it is astonishing how soon we can place ourselves on a footing with neglected wives and discontented daughters. If you come not soon, one of the rewards held out to you in my former letter, will certainly not be forthcoming. No schoolboy keeps gingerbread for his comrade, without feeling a desire to nibble at it; so, if you appear not to look after your own interest, say you had fair warning. For my own part, I am rather embarrassed than gratified by the prospect of such an affair, when I have on the tapis another of a different nature. This enigma I will explain at meeting.

"Thus finishes my long communication. If my motives of action do not appear explicit, think in what a maze fortune has involved me, and how much must necessarily depend on the chapter of accidents.

"Yesterday I may be said to have opened my

siege, for I presented myself before Clara. I had no very flattering reception—that was of little consequence, for I did not expect one. By alarming her fears, I made an impression thus far, that she acquiesces in my appearing before her as her brother's guest, and this is no small point gained. She will become accustomed to look on me, and will remember with less bitterness the trick which I played her formerly; while I, on the other hand, by a similar force of habit, will get over certain awkward feelings with which I have been compunctiously visited whenever I look upon her.—Adieu! Health and brotherhood.

"Thine,

"ETHERINGTON."

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

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